

NEWS: INTERNATIONAL

The Chinese leader has set the tone for talks on Hong Kong, which now seem to have collapsed

Shadow of Deng darkens hopes for democracy

By Tony Walker in Beijing

Pronouncements by China's paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping, on Hong Kong may not have quite the same messianic force as a *falun* issued by an Iranian ayatollah but they have set the tone for an uncompromising Chinese position.

These include his warning in September 1982 to Lady Thatcher, then British prime minister, that in the event of unrest in the colony during the transition to 1997 China reserved the right to intervene.

He also urged that the two sides

work closely to ensure a smooth transfer. More importantly, he advised Britain's premier, fresh from her victory in the Falklands war, that sovereignty was non-negotiable.

Chinese officials, taking their lead from Mr Deng's "talk", have played hardball over Hong Kong's future, first in negotiations on the Joint Declaration of 1984 in which Britain ceded sovereignty, and subsequently in discussions on the Basic Law - the colony's post-1997 constitution.

Mr Deng is also reported to have warned in conversation with colleagues that Britain would resort to

"little tricks" aimed at muddying the waters in the lead-up to 1997. Mr Patten's plans to broaden the franchise for elections in Hong Kong appear, in the Chinese mind, to fall into this category. Beijing insists that the Patten formula contradicts prior Sino-British agreements. Mr Deng's Hong Kong *falun* has meant that from the beginning of Sino-British negotiations over the Patten formula in April this year there has been little room for compromise or manoeuvre. Britain's negotiators, in 17 rounds of talks, have often felt they were talking to a brick wall.

Beijing has, on occasions, hinted at possible compromise, but suggestions of flexibility have proved illusory. Officials have returned time and again to a re-statement of basic principles which derive from the views expressed by Mr Deng in his meeting with the then Mrs Thatcher. Pointedly, Mr Deng's views on Hong Kong were published on the front page of Chinese newspapers on September 24, the day after Beijing failed to win the nomination for the 2000 Olympics. This was seen as more than a coincidence and appeared to reflect Beijing's displeasure over remarks by Mr Douglas Hurd, the foreign secretary, in which he had forcefully championed Sydney's bid. British officials in Beijing hope that in the Chinese way an "eleventh hour" compromise might be possible, but they also recognise that the signs are not auspicious.

Chinese officials have for weeks been canvassing publicly the prospect of a breakdown of talks. Mr Jiang Zemin, a vice-foreign minister and China's chief negotiator, has said that there are two possibilities: success or failure. There is no doubt that China has

been bolstered in its approach to the talks by a feeling that it has not much to lose by refusing to budge: after all, Hong Kong will return to Beijing's control in three and a half years whatever Mr Patten's electoral arrangements.

No Chinese official would presume to contradict (or seek to reinforce) Mr Deng's edict. Indeed, Premier Li Peng in his National Day speech on October 1, noted that the "recent publication of Comrade Deng Xiaoping's important talk on the Hong Kong problem has fully expressed our determination".

Defiant China determined on a tame HK

When, in April, Britain and China embarked on talks about Hong Kong's political development, their chance of reaching an agreement was never bright. But the depth of division is underlined by the fact that the only piece of common ground to emerge between the two after 160 hours of talks is lowering the colony's voting age to 18 from 21 years.

Although Mr Chris Patten, Hong Kong's governor, was quick yesterday to leave the door open to further talks, the reality facing his administration and the British government is that China will never agree to increasing democratic participation in Hong Kong along Mr Patten's lines.

The immediate question for Mr Patten and his colleagues in the British government is

Britain still hopes for a negotiated deal, writes Simon Holberton

what to do next. The colony's Legislative Council (LegCo), Hong Kong's 60-strong law-making body, will expect to hear how Britain plans to proceed when the governor addresses LegCo on Thursday.

The most likely outcome will be the splitting of Mr Patten's five proposals for democratic reform - first made a year ago - into two bills.

The first - which may be presented to LegCo as early as December 8 - will encompass the so-called "simple" issues which Britain and China were unable to agree on at the weekend. These are: abolishing appointments to Hong Kong's district boards and municipal councils so that elections next year will be fully democratic; creating 30 single-member electorates for the LegCo elections in 1995; and lowering the voting age.

The second bill will consist of the more contentious aspects of Mr Patten's plans. These are: broadening democratic participation in elections for 30 "functional" constituencies, which represent business and professional interests; and the constitution of an "electoral college" which will elect 10 LegCo members in 1995.

An important consideration

for ministers is whether this second bill should be Mr Patten's 1992 proposals unmodified, or the compromise offer the UK put to China during the summer. This decision has yet to be taken but, in the words of one of the governor's aides, "If a process of mutilation is to take place, better to start with a whole body rather than half."

The speed of presentation of the second bill will be determined by China's reaction to the taking of the first. At the weekend Britain proposed an 18th round of talks to discuss the more difficult parts of Mr Patten's plans. If, in the face of LegCo debating the first bill, China takes up that offer then more time will be available for discussion.

The offer of more talks was mostly presentational but also reflected the UK's unchanged policy towards relations with China. The prize still to be fought for - which now appears to be beyond Britain's grasp - remains an agreement. Since the negotiation of the Joint Declaration between 1982 and 1984 the cornerstones of British policy have been to agree "transitional" issues with the Chinese on the basis that what is agreed has a greater chance of survival after 1997 than what is not.

It is far from clear, however, if China really wants an agreement on the political transition of Hong Kong, or that Britain could live with what China seeks. One thing which has emerged from the talks is that, in spite of the neutering of Mr Patten's proposals during the summer, China was still not satisfied.

The inescapable conclusion to draw from this is that China desires a tame legislature in 1997, one which not only ensures that most of China's wishes are observed, LegCo is unlikely to agree to broadening voter participation in the functional constituencies; it could opt for appointment, rather than election, to the electoral college.

The equally unpalatable fact for Mr Patten and the British government is that when the governor's legislation gets to LegCo its members will probably ensure that most of China's wishes are observed. LegCo is unlikely to agree to broadening voter participation in the functional constituencies; it could opt for appointment, rather than election, to the electoral college.

The current balance of power



Chris Patten at a St John Ambulance Brigade parade in Hong Kong yesterday. The governor must decide how best to pursue his policy of more democracy

in LegCo suggests that its members are more likely to vote in the direction of Beijing than of London. There are about 23 members who will support Mr Patten's democratic alternative and an equal number who will do China's bidding. In the middle are 10 members - known as the "Breakfast Club" - most of whom when pushed will incline to Beijing on the big issues.

Time has never been on Britain's side; less so now that China's resumption of sovereignty is just 34 years away. But that reality cuts both ways: China has a clearer idea of what is at stake for itself.

Possibly for that reason Mr Cao Fengmin, a senior Chinese government official, said on Friday that if there were no agreement, "the sky will not fall down. We are confident that we, together with the Hong Kong people, can maintain Hong Kong's stability and prosperity."

Colony's companies still place faith in investment

Business takes the long view

By Simon Holberton in Hong Kong and Agencies

Hong Kong's business community last night shrugged off the apparent breakdown in Anglo-Chinese talks about the colony's political future.

Governor Chris Patten has few allies among Hong Kong's Chinese and expatriate businessmen. Many feel that he is attempting to do too much, too late in Britain's administration of Hong Kong.

Managers of some of the colony's largest companies said their view of Hong Kong as a place to invest would not be affected even if China stood by its threat to overturn the results of the colony's 1995 elections when it assumes sovereignty on July 1 1997.

According to one senior British businessman: "It is not that there would be rioting and upheaval if they did that. Hong Kong people are quite pragmatic. There may be a lot of words and shouting but they know there's nothing to be gained. No one will come to rescue them from the Motherland [China]."

However, not all business people think that the current Anglo-Chinese fight over Hong Kong is wasted. One leading Chinese businessman praised Mr Patten for bringing the issue of Hong Kong's political development in to the open.

"It is better for Hong Kong if we get this settled once and for all now," he said. "It would be worse for us if this debate took place after 1997."

"The extent to which Hong Kong can maintain its independence will depend on how Hong Kong people act, not on what the British do," he said. Most businessmen believe that Hong Kong can have a good relationship with China only if it works with Beijing rather than confront it. However they are confident that China will not damage Hong Kong's economy in reprisal for what Mr Patten has done.

Traders in Hong Kong's volatile stock market believe that the market has already substantially discounted failure in the talks and Mr Patten putting his proposals to the colony's legislature.

The market will be focusing on what the Chinese government says if Mr Patten does

take unilateral action. Here the key will be the nature of threats, if any, Beijing makes about the economy.

"The market is likely to suffer increased selling pressure but I don't think investors will be too pessimistic at this stage," said Mr Simon Lam of Mansion House Securities.

"Even if a first-stage agreement cannot be reached it does not mean that there will be no talks in the future, so I don't think the market will correct very substantially," he said. Indeed analysts said a correction was long overdue after the strong gains of the past few months.

The Hang Seng index edged higher last week, gaining just 10.48 points over the week to 9,274.42 on Friday.

Taiwan party stands firm

By Dennis Engbarth in Taipei

Taiwan's ruling Nationalist Party failed to suffer an expected setback in local government elections at the weekend, although its share of the popular vote fell below 50 per cent for the first time.

The elections, which had been seen as a key test of the party's strength following internal dissension and corruption scandals, appeared to bolster the position of President Lee Teng-hui, who has led the island's democratic reforms.

The Kuomintang held on to 13 county and city mayoral posts - the same number as it had previously held. Candidates backed by the opposition Democratic Progressive party (DPP) won six posts, a net loss of one seat. The two others went respectively to a pro-DPP independent and a pro-KMT independent.

Mr Hsu Hsin-liang, the DPP chairman, resigned to take responsibility for the setback and attributed the defeat to "unprecedented levels" of vote-buying by KMT candidates, as well as to the impact made by President Lee, who as KMT chairman undertook an unprecedented personal campaign swing across Taiwan.

However, the electorate gave the KMT only 47 per cent of 7.6m votes cast, down from 54 per cent in similar mayoral elections in 1989. The DPP, which advocates formal independence for Taiwan and social reform policies, gained 41 per cent, up from 38 per cent in 1989.

The Chinese New party, a breakaway from the KMT, received only 3 per cent. The rest went to independents.

Mr Hsu Shun-teh, KMT secretary-general, said: "In an international environment in which many ruling parties are being turned out of office, we cannot say that to retain the same number of 13 mayoral seats was a loss."

Mr Hsu of the DPP said Mr Lee was now in a position to step up plans to push through a constitutional amendment for direct presidential elections and run for the post himself.

But he said Mr Lee "had expended much political capital" by exposing himself to criticism from the DPP in the campaign and would enjoy less political momentum going into a presidential race.

Industrial park for Bangalore

A Singapore-based consortium led by state-controlled enterprises is joining together with India's Tata group to develop a \$235m (€108.4m) industrial park in the southern Indian city of Bangalore, writes Kieran Cooke in Kuala Lumpur.

The Singapore consortium, led by state-controlled Singapore Technologies Industrial Corporation and Technology Parks, will have a 40 per cent in the project.

Tata will have a 40 per cent stake while the Karnataka state government will have the remaining 20 per cent.

Ankara PM in reshuffle

Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller yesterday reshuffled her cabinet, changing five ministers of her own True Path party, Reuters reports from Ankara.

Mrs Ciller, who took office in June, made no changes among ministers of her coalition government's junior partner, the Social Democrat Populist party, the Anatolian news agency reported.

All the True Path ministers had resigned to give Mrs Ciller a free hand to reshape her cabinet.

Past and present woes combine to test Gaidar

Mr Yegor Gaidar, fighting for the politics of reform against worsening polls for his Russia's Choice party, at the weekend met a Soviet nightmare - and one of his own.

The first deputy premier, campaigning for national elections on December 12, arrived in the town of Vorkuta on Friday. Earlier in the week, he was mauled by industrialists struggling with his market reforms in the city of Ulyanovsk.

"At the beginning of the week we met the problems of the future," said Mr Alexei Ulukayev, a Gaidar adviser. "Now we meet the problems of the past."

It is a hideous past: the name of Vorkuta is a horror akin to Auschwitz. Created in the 1930s by the secret police, Vorkuta had two functions: to accommodate millions of political prisoners, and to mine in an area where few would voluntarily work. The Vorkuta-Pechora basin - rich in coal, oil, bauxite and precious metals - was opened up by convicts and *zeks*, who built it in conditions which froze them alive when they dropped from exhaustion.

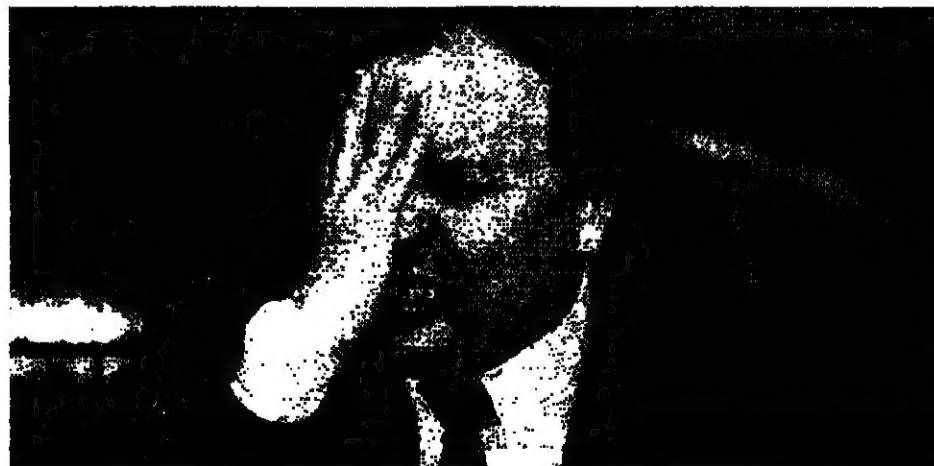
Nikita Khrushchev's liberation of the *zeks* in the mid-1950s meant the replacement of coercion by attraction - the attraction of high salaries.

John Lloyd follows the advocate of reform on the campaign trail to Vorkuta

Miners' wages are now between Rhs200,000 and Rhs700,000 a month, at the top of Russian state wages. The bargain has been that a worker prepared to stay through winters where the temperature falls to -50 degrees, would get relatively rich.

But the bargain is coming unstuck. Desperate for savings, the government has cut regional subsidies which maintained pensions and benefits at between one-third and one-half higher than in the rest of Russia. Mrs Marina Sokolova, a miners' widow, had a cut in her pension from Rhs68,000 to Rhs44,000 a month. "I'm not used to living on that. We never had poor people here, but now we have. They stand in the doorways of shops, out of the cold, begging."

Since autumn, the government has also delayed paying the miners' wages - by up to three months. Vorkuta's 25,000 miners threatened to strike. The threat is taken seriously by the government - even though this is not the major coal-producing region of Russia and the miners are split. One pit has four competing unions. "When the unions went on strike in 1989, [Soviet premier Nikolai] Ryzhkov fell," says Mr



Yegor Gaidar: mauled by industrialists and now facing rumblings from miners

Roman Sirozov, leader of the new independent union's strike committee. "When they went on strike in 1989, Gorbachev fell. Judge for yourself."

This is hyperbole, but with a basis in fact. The miners were promoted as the proletarian vanguard in Soviet times, and their defection from communism and support for Mr Boris Yeltsin was of huge importance for the latter's presidency. They have been kept sweet since 1991 by big rises and by a freeze on pit closures

- meaning that pit subsidies now account for the largest single expenditure in the budget. Their opposition during an election would be a huge blow.

The Vorkuta men deny a political aim - in spite of gleeful headlines in the opposition press declaring that they had demanded Mr Yeltsin's resignation. "We have never said this," says Mr Murat Bugulov, a leader of the new independent union. "We know the risk we run of helping the communists or Zhirinovskiy [neo-fas-

cists] coming to power. But the government must fulfil its responsibilities."

Vorkuta is among the most extreme examples of resistance to market economics. It produces for the state and is kept going by the state: any enterprise beyond a small trading company would flee from the huge extra costs of working in the Arctic. Mr Nikolai Pobov, a lawyer working for the miners' unions, says that "the miners helped create Yeltsin and supported his reforms: now they

find market reform is directly threatening their interests."

Mr Gaidar flew to this unpromising campaign opportunity through a snowstorm last Friday night to meet leaders of the miners and heads of the republic of Komi, where Vorkuta is situated. He came as a minister and as head of the special commission on coal - an unwelcome responsibility dumped on him by Mr Viktor Chernomyrdin, the prime minister - and not as a party leader. But in practice these roles are now inseparable.

Late upon arrival, he was taken by bus to the biggest hall in town to take his seat as guest of honour at a gala show - in celebration of the first half century of the official existence of Vorkuta.

It was an "uncomfortable event not in itself, for it was well staged and jolly, but for the echoes of the place's ghastly past which could not be suppressed. A singer from the border guards (a KGB division) gave a fine rendering of an awful song, "Vorkuta is Vorkuta", which contained such sentiments as "the frost is cold" and "our history is a sad one" juxtaposed with "but our hearts are warm" and "we believe in our future". It was

the leitmotif of the evening.

Mr Gaidar, in his obligatory speech, evoked the murderous past. But his ending was upbeat - Vorkuta had a future, the lesson was to remove the hopeless pits and enterprises and move to profitable production. He got mild applause.

After his meetings with the miners on Saturday, Mr Gaidar claimed that he had "reached mutual understanding on many points" - which seemed to be code for not reaching understanding on others. Mr Gleg Soskovets, another first deputy premier, told the Interfax agency at the weekend that Rhs77m had been found to pay back wages - largely by squeezing back debts from the steel plants.

On Saturday night, he flew on to Kuzbass - the larger coal basin in southern Siberia, in which strike threats have also been made and to which Vorkuta delegates have gone for support. A strike threat from last Wednesday still stands - and talks between the national miners' leaders and Mr Gaidar resume in Moscow today.

A patched solution is the best bet. But the past, and present, nightmare of Vorkuta is not lightly excised. "In the end," says Mr Bugulov, "they have to decide: do they want us to exist or not. That's what it comes to."

THE FINANCIAL TIMES
Published by The Financial Times
(Europe) Group, 1, Abchurch Lane,
London EC4N 3DF, UK. Telephone: 011 4397 4000. Fax: 011 4397 4001.
Telex: 63990. Cable: FT. Registered
in England. Managing Director:
Mr. David Sainsbury. Printed by
DPM Druck-Vertrieb and
Marketing GmbH, Adenau-Rheinland,
Germany. Circulation: 1,000,000.
Subscription Editor: Richard Lambert,
c/o The Financial Times Limited,
Number One Southwark Bridge, London
SE1 1UL, UK. Shareholders of the
Financial Times (Europe) Group are:
The Financial Times (Europe) Ltd,
London and F.T. (Germany) Advertis-
ing Ltd, London. Shareholders of the
above mentioned two companies are:
The Financial Times Limited, Number One
Southwark Bridge, London SE1 1UL.
The Company is incorporated under the
laws of England and Wales. Chairman:
D.C.M. Bell.

FRANCE
Publishing Director: J. Rolley, 168 Rue
de Rivoli, F-75004 Paris Cedex 01. Tel.
phone: (01) 4297-0521. Fax: (01)
4297-0529. Printer: S.A. Nord Edito,
1521 Rue de la Gare, F-91000 Roissy-
Chadon. Editor: Richard Lambert.
ISSN: 1143-2753. Communication
Paritaire No 67080D.

DEUTSCHLAND
Financial Times (Scandinavia) Ltd,
Vindstadstrasse 42A, DE-11611 Copen-
hagen. Telephone: 33 13 44 41. Fax: 33
30 33 35.

27/11/93

Saxony-Anhalt ministers resign after disclosure that they overpaid themselves

E German state government quits

By Judy Dempsey in Berlin

Mr Werner Münch, the prime minister of the eastern German state of Saxony-Anhalt, yesterday offered the resignation of his entire government following official disclosures that west German members of his cabinet had paid themselves too much.

He said that ministers would remain in office as a caretaker administration until new elections can be held.

The resignation of the conservative-led Christian Democratic Union government, which is in coalition with the

liberal Free Democrats, represents another blow to Chancellor Helmut Kohl, whose own federal government in Bonn comprises a similar coalition. Last week he was forced to accept the withdrawal of Mr Steffen Heitmann, the justice minister of Saxony, as candidate for the presidency. He had been Mr Kohl's chosen candidate for the post.

It is also a setback for the other established political parties. All of their ratings among east Germans have plummeted following a series of corruption scandals in western Germany, as well as disenchantment

with the status quo because of high unemployment in the five eastern states.

Mr Münch, a former member of the European Parliament and university lecturer, told a news conference in Magdeburg, the state's capital, that neither he nor other ministers had received "at any time illegal payments". This resignation can only be explained as a step to prevent further damage to our families, our state and our governing bodies.

The state audit office in Saxony-Anhalt reported at the weekend that the west German politicians who had moved to

the state as ministers after unification had together overpaid themselves by as much as DM900,000 (£357,000) since they took up their posts in mid-1991.

It added that the ministers, including Mr Münch, had inflated their salaries with excessive entertainment allowances, which had swelled their income by DM200,000 in the past two years.

Officials in Saxony-Anhalt said last night that, by offering the resignations now, the CDU and the FDP might be trying to limit the damage in time for federal and state elections which will be held next year.

Next Sunday's local government elections in the eastern state of Brandenburg, headed by the Social Democrats, are likely to provide reliable indications about the mood among east Germans.

The west German cabinet ministers named for excessive payments also include Mr Horst Rehburger, the Free Democrat economics minister, regarded as responsible for attracting private investment into the region; Mr Hartmut Perschau, interior minister; and Mr Werner Schreiber, social affairs minister. Press review, Page 4

Geneva talks on Bosnia

By Laura Silber in Geneva

In a last-ditch attempt to revive talks on Bosnia's partition, leaders of the republic's warring parties today meet European Union foreign ministers in Geneva.

The meeting aims to establish a platform for fresh talks, centring on a phase-out of sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro in exchange for territorial concessions by Bosnian Serbs to the Muslims.

Five people were killed and five wounded in Sarajevo yesterday when a shell exploded in a city street, showing there was no sign that the violence might end or that Serb, Croat and Muslim leaders would succeed in reaching a political settlement for the republic's divi-

sion into three ethnic states. Before leaving for Geneva, Mr Alija Izetbegovic, the president of Bosnia, urged tighter United Nations sanctions on Serbia if the Bosnian Serbs refuse to hand over land.

"If the Serb side does not return territories, sanctions should be tightened and not lifted," he told a news conference in Sarajevo, which is besieged by Serb forces.

The EU initiative is a revitalised version of a deal, mediated by envoys Lord Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg, which collapsed in September when Bosnian Serbs refused to meet Muslim demands for 3-4 per cent more territory in order to create a viable state.

In an ominous signal for the Geneva talks, Mr Radovan

Karadzic, Bosnian Serb leader, said at the weekend his forces, which control 70 per cent of Bosnia, would insist on the lifting of sanctions on Belgrade before conceding any land.

Serb leaders who previously endorsed the Geneva plan to hand over 20 per cent of their land show no trace of intending to fulfil their pledge. In fact, their troops are seizing more Muslim-held land in northeast Bosnia.

They are apparently confident sanctions will be lifted anyway. However, Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic is likely to press his Bosnian proxy, Mr Karadzic, to hand over land in an attempt to get the sanctions eased before elections on December 19. Press review, Page 4

Berlusconi's broadcasts raise worries

By Haig Simonian in Milan

Prominent Italian left-wing and centrist politicians yesterday warned against the misuse of media power after Saturday's decision by Mr Silvio Berlusconi to use his private television channels to broadcast a 90-minute press conference outlining his political ambitions.

Prime-time viewers of Canale 5, the most popular of the three channels owned by Mr Berlusconi's Fininvest group, were dumbfounded to find an advertised feature film replaced by an unedited broadcast of Mr Berlusconi's political debut before the foreign press association in Rome the previous day.

Earlier on Saturday, the schedule on Rete 4, another Fininvest channel, was changed to make way for the same event. Together, the three Fininvest channels regularly account for the lion's share of Italian viewing figures.

The summary use of the two channels confirmed fears among Mr Berlusconi's critics, who last week warned of possible abuse of his media interests. Yesterday, Mr Vincenzo Vita, of the left-wing Democratic Party of the Left, said it highlighted the "risks connected to Berlusconi's presence in broadcasting".

Mr Giorgio Napolitano, president of the lower house of parliament and a senior member of the left-wing Democratic Party of the Left, pointed to the risks inherent in any leading businessman getting into politics. In such circumstances, "the institutions [of the state] must take responsibility to guarantee the maximum balance in use of the media", he said.

Occhetto tries to break free from communist past

The leader of Italy's PDS must convince the world his party could form a credible government, writes Robert Graham

Mr Achille Occhetto, the 57-year-old leader of Italy's Party of the Democratic Left (PDS), has launched a charm offensive.

Fresh from his party's success in the first round of local elections last Sunday, he is now trying to convince Italians, and the international community at large, that the PDS is no longer a prisoner of its communist past and that it could form the credible core of a future government.

The lira lost ground early last week because speculators reacted with alarm to the prospect that former communists might dominate Italy's next government. Thus, the first stage of Mr Occhetto's offensive was his call early in the week to the financial markets for calm.

This he followed by indicating his willingness to help the government of Prime Minister Carlo Azeglio Ciampi to ensure the passage of the 1994 budget legislation - vital for Italy's international credibility. He also submitted himself to a critical grilling from European Union ambassadors on his party's economic policy.

As he talks about PDS strategy, in the same imposing offices that once housed the defunct Italian Communist party (PCI), Mr Occhetto seems to have dropped his often criticised ambiguity. He has seized the whip of power, and he is obliged to define what the PDS stands for.

The budget will be a key test: the Ciampi government will resign if the legislation fails to pass. Mr Occhetto wants to avoid this at all costs. He would prefer the PDS to abstain and avoid associating with a discredited Christian Democrat-led majority. "But", he says, "if the old centrist majority disappears in parliament, we are prepared to assume our responsibility [and vote] to approve the budget on condition that parliament is dissolved immediately thereafter".

However, Mr Occhetto has been closer to the Ciampi government than is often recognised. Three PDS ministers were chosen by the prime minister, but withdrawn by Mr Occhetto because the four-party coalition backing the government voted to

retain parliamentary immunity privileges to avoid corruption enquiries.

Mr Occhetto describes this vote as "morally unacceptable". However, the withdrawal of the ministers, only 10 hours after being sworn in, enabled him to head off a potential storm.

He clearly feels better equipped to oppose internal criticism and is open in the way he "appreciates" the present government's efforts to reduce Italy's huge public sector deficit.

A PDS-based government, he says, would "continue the restructuring of public finances and the reorganisation of the

civil service". The idea of a "spendthrift" left, feeding a large public sector, was over. Funds needed to relaunch the economy would have to be found without increasing debt levels. He says much can be done by selling off the state's huge stock of property, worth L30,000bn (£12bn).

A late convert to privatisation, Mr Occhetto says he will not oppose the plans already under way. However, the PDS would seek to give more direction to industrial policy and encourage more research. His main concern is job creation, and this is where a progressive government would place more emphasis. He endorses the idea of "solidarity contracts" - in the form of job-sharing or a reduced working week - to get round the recession.

This is a long way from the prevailing party ideology in 1988, when he was first elected head of the Communist party. It is also a remarkable evolution from the founding days of the PDS in February 1991. But he is not surprised: "There had long been a social democratic strain in the PCI... that had similarities with Germany's SPD."

The party proudly wears its label of the Left and has been admitted to the Socialist International. Yet, when pressed to define the nature of the modern Italian left, Mr Occhetto is without a quick slogan; nor does he refer to the welfare state. Endorsement of the proposed 1994 budget would mean rolling back welfare benefits and pension privileges. A sore point, too, is the unresolved rivalry with former fellow members of the

Communist party who split to form the hardline Reconstructed Communism with nearly 10 per cent of the old membership. He is selling himself as the leader of the first party to break with the past. He insists that the party has not been involved in systematic corruption and blames the Christian Democrats and Socialists as the worst offenders. But he is cynical about the real culprits being punished. "In this country you catch the robbers, not the assassins," he observes with wry humour.

Although some 112 PDS affiliates have fallen foul of corruption investigations, this has yet to affect voter support. The PDS is attracting some 16 per cent of the vote nationwide.

To obtain power, Mr Occhetto was astute enough to realise early the need for alliances: "It has required great patience to get this idea across. We are a moderate force, the only one capable of drawing the disparate forces on the left together."

The PDS is the sole party with a national organisation, inherited from the Communist party. Through this, the PDS has established a series of local alliances with the Greens, Radicals, left-wing Catholics, former Socialists, even some Communists, and some dissident Christian Democrats.

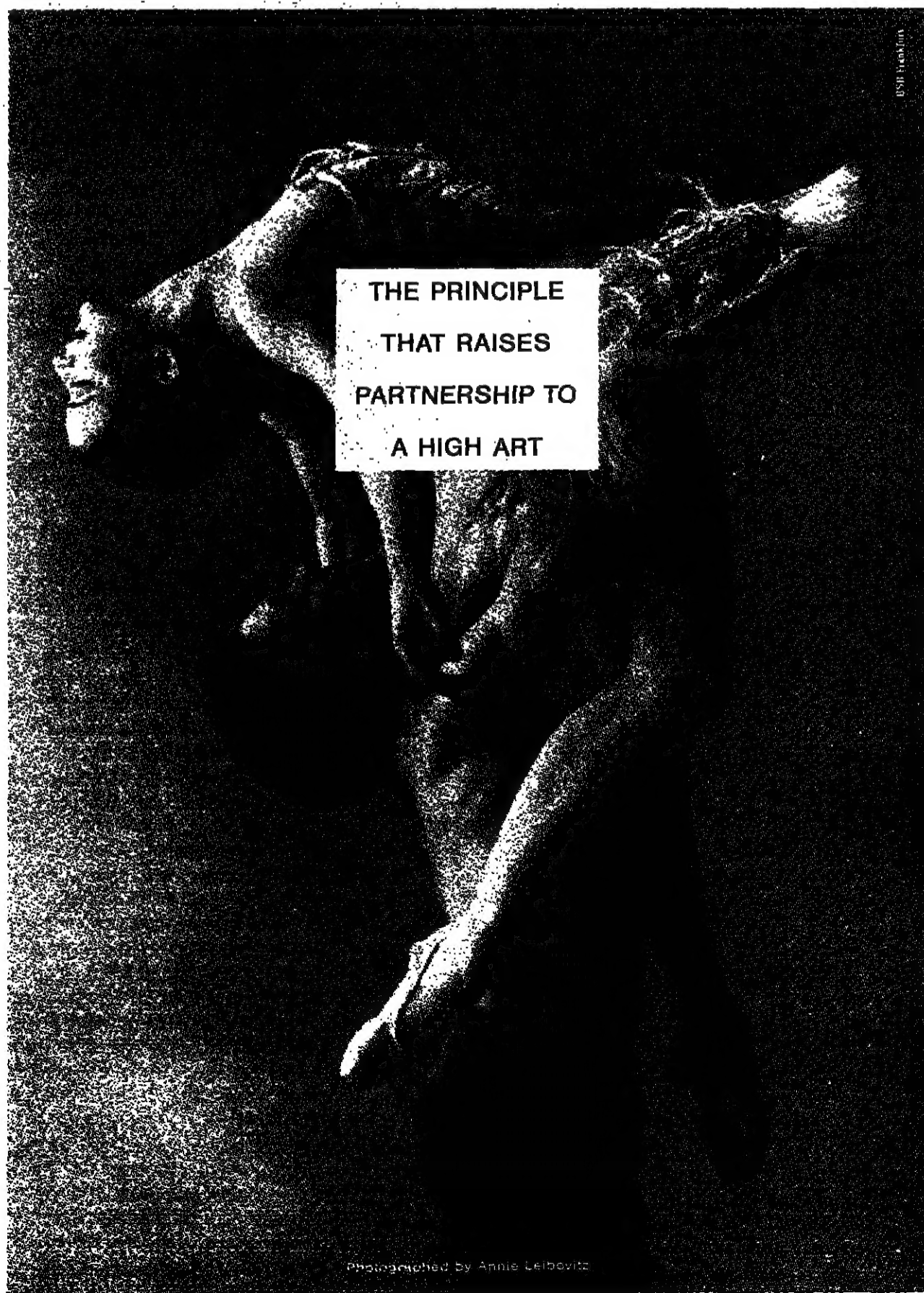
"The country is not yet ready for an Anglo-Saxon division into two parties," he says. "The next elections will be fought between two big coalitions on the left and the right; the moderates in the centre [essentially the ruling four-party coalition] will divide between those ready to govern with the left and those ready to govern with the right."

He has got a head start by laying the ground for such a coalition on the left in local elections. He now has to mould this at the national level.



Occhetto: closer to the Ciampi government than is often recognised

Piero Sestini



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NEWS: INTERNATIONAL

Mahathir row with Keating intensifies

By Kieran Cooke
in Kuala Lumpur

Blunt-talking Australian politicians have often ruffled the sensitivities of neighbouring governments in southeast Asia. But now, just as Australia is making a big push to become more interlinked with the dynamic economies of the region, the country's straight-talking prime minister, Mr Paul Keating, has provoked a row with Malaysia.

Mr Keating has been critical of Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's non-appearance at the recent Apec summit, and Malaysia struck back at the weekend.

Dr Mahathir had said that he did not attend the summit because of certain countries, mainly the US and Australia, were trying to railroad Apec into becoming a organisation structured along the lines of the European Union.

"Please don't ask me any more questions about Dr Mahathir," Mr Keating said to the Australian press corps. "I couldn't care less, frankly, whether he comes or not. I am sick of... questions about Dr

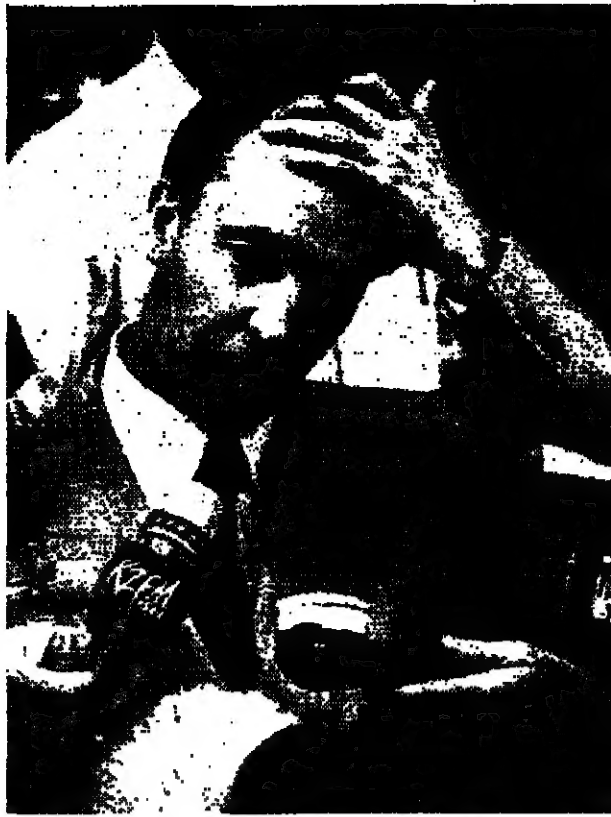
Mahathir... Apec is bigger than all of us... Australia, the US, Malaysia, Dr Mahathir and any other racists."

At the weekend, Mr Mahathir, Malaysia's information minister, announced that Malaysia would be banning Australian-made TV programmes and advertising material and that Malaysia's state-controlled broadcasting service would be reporting only negative news about Australia.

"This," he said, "is to tell the Australian government and media that what was said by Keating was not only an insult to our prime minister but also to the Malaysian people and to the country." He insisted that Mr Keating publicly apologise.

Dr Mahathir, himself not averse to the occasional undiplomatic verbal thrust, said that he was disappointed with Mr Keating but chose to lay most of the blame on the Australian media. "Some newspapers made me out to be a difficult person and very unpopular and that Malaysia was about to burst into racial violence."

Australia's claim to be part of Asia was meaningless.



Keating: 'I am sick of questions about Dr Mahathir'



Mahathir: 'It is difficult for us to love Australia'

"How," he asked, "can Australia claim to be part of Asia when Australian journalists lack manners? It is difficult for us to love Australia."

While the Malaysian media and political opposition also joined in the war of words, the row will probably be resolved by diplomacy.

Mr Keating, due for an official visit to Malaysia next year, has made closer relations with

southeast Asia the central point of his government's economic and foreign policy. "For the first time," says Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, "Australia is paying more attention to its geography than its history."

Australian exports to the region have been growing rapidly. Two-way trade with Malaysia rose more than 30 per cent in 1992-93 to A\$2.3bn

(£1.6bn), with Australia showing a healthy surplus. Australian investors are involved in several big projects in Malaysia, particularly in the mining and petrochemical sectors.

But Australia's relations with its Asian neighbours are never easy. Relations with Indonesia have only recently improved. A few years Malaysia took offence over an Australian TV series which

depicted life in an Australian embassy. Kuala Lumpur said the series was modelled on Malaysia and was very insulting. "It's a clash of styles," says a Malaysian academic who studied in Australia. "Australia's politicians and its press can say anything they want. We have to be a lot more careful about what we talk about. Australians are going to find life very difficult as Asians."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel hopeful of PLO deal

Israeli ministers yesterday played down talk of a crisis in the autonomy negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organisation, writes David Horowitz in Jerusalem. PLO Chairman Yassir Arafat, who spoke on Saturday of an "impasse", said he was ready to send delegates back to the negotiating table tomorrow.

Israeli ministers conceded that, less than three weeks before the Israeli army is due to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area of the West Bank, there were still deep differences with the PLO over several substantive issues. The most crucial concerns the planned army redeployment in Gaza. The PLO wants all troops withdrawn; Israel insists on maintaining a presence to ensure the security of 5,000 Jewish settlers in the Strip.

Nevertheless, Israel's environment minister, Mr Yossi Sarid, declared confidently: "There are difficulties, but they are not insoluble."

Air France losses grow

Air France, the state-owned airline, will this year lose FF7.5bn (£1.25bn) and see a further decline in its world market share, Mr Bernard Bosson, the transport minister, said at the weekend, writes David Buchanan in Paris.

With estimates of its 1993 losses steadily worsening from the FF3.5bn deficit forecast in April, Mr Bosson told the Senate "this shows how quickly the company has been sinking". He also said it had been Prime Minister Edouard Balladur's personal decision to reject the "800 straight redemptions" contained in the master plan of Mr Bernard Attali, the former Air France president, who resigned after the government gave in to striking airline staff. The prime minister would countenance only "a few dozen" layoffs, Mr Bosson said. Mr Christian Blanc, Air France's new president, is re-negotiating the Attali plan with the unions.

Brazil near debt accord

A large majority of Brazil's foreign bank creditors support the \$22bn debt agreement due to be signed in Toronto today, writes Richard Waters in New York.

By the end of last week, creditors accounting for 86 per cent of the debt had backed the deal, said Mr Bill Rhodes, vice-chairman of Citibank. With more European and Japanese banks expected to communicate agreement by this morning, the proportion should reach 90 per cent, he said. The deal needs 95 per cent support to be triggered but banks supporting the deal are confident it will go through. Brazil has yet to reach an agreement with the IMF, on which the bank deal depends. Economic reforms outlined last week are intended to form the basis for such an agreement.

'Roll up sleeves' - Kohl

Chancellor Helmut Kohl yesterday called for "unconventional solutions" and new labour practices to pull Germany out of its worst post-war recession, writes reports.

Harking back to Bonn's "economic miracle" of the post-war years, he told a business conference that Germans should "roll up our sleeves in the current recession and structural crisis, just as we did with great success in the 1950s".

"We need a healthy economy [with] secure and competitive jobs," he told the conference organised by the German Chamber of Handicrafts in Karlsruhe.

Shipowners in dispute

European shipowners yesterday sought to take the heat out of a dispute with their customers over freight rates across the North Atlantic, writes Charles Redcliffe in London.

European Union ministers will later today review a special exemption granted to shipowners which allows them to group together in "conferences" to agree prices on certain routes. Belgium, as president of the European Union, is to file a motion confirming the exemption for conferences.

Shippers have protested that the pact between large shipowners such as P&O, Nedlloyd and Hapag Lloyd has been used to push up freight rates.

The shipowners counter that before the agreement was reached freight rates for a standard container had fallen from \$1,600 to less than \$900.

Border deaths probed

The Venezuelan government is investigating reports reaching Caracas at the weekend that 18 members of the Yanomami tribe died and many became seriously ill from mercury poisoning, writes Joseph Mann in Caracas.

Pakistan refuses to stop nuclear programme

By Farhan Bokhari in Islamabad

Pakistan said yesterday it would never give up its controversial nuclear programme until there was an agreement to make the entire region a nuclear weapons-free zone.

Mr Sardar Asif Ali Zardari, the country's foreign minister, made the statement during an abortive debate in parliament which ended in disor-

ray when opposition MPs led by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, stormed out of parliament in protest at a government attempt to obstruct open discussion on the nuclear issue. The government cited security reasons.

Pakistan has admitted its ability to build a bomb, but claims its programme is strictly peaceful. "The present peaceful programme will

continue," the foreign minister said to an almost empty house after the opposition had left.

The government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has come under fierce attack from opposition critics in the PML (Pakistan Muslim League) who are demanding a full explanation of the country's nuclear policy.

Their demands have gathered pace since last week's reports that the Clinton administration wants to introduce

new legislation which would end the military and economic aid cut-off against Pakistan.

That cut-off was introduced three years ago following allegations that Islamabad had acquired the capability to produce nuclear weapons. Pakistan denies the charge. But last week's reports from Washington have raised fresh concerns among Pakistani

nationalists, who fear that the nuclear programme which has already been "capped" or put at a standstill may be "rolled back" or cut down in size, as part of a deal.

Last week's move in Washington is the most significant step to resolve the dispute since the aid cut-off. However, it is not clear if a bill to lift the embargo against Pakistan would be passed in the US congress.

Army purge strengthens Nigeria's military ruler

By Paul Adams in Lagos

General Sani Abacha strengthened his position as Nigeria's new head of state at the weekend by purging army officers loyal to the former military ruler, Gen Ibrahim Babangida. He also formed a civilian cabinet which balances tribal loyalties and includes some respected ministers.

The moves show Nigeria's military ruler, who seized power on November 17, combines ruthlessness and persuasion in dealing with opponents.

Following last week's forced retirement of Lt Gen Aliyu Mohammed as head of the army, the removal of 17 offi-

cers including nine brigadiers is seen as a decisive blow to Gen Babangida's remaining support in the armed forces. A reshuffle in September under the interim government had failed to curb pro-Babangida factions at the senior level or to quell unrest in lower ranks.

The 33-member cabinet, known as the executive council, includes several supporters of Mr Moshood Abiola, who emerged the unofficial winner of the annulled presidential election in June. The cabinet is headed by Gen Abacha and the chief of general staff, Lt Gen Oladipo Diya, who comes from the pro-Abiola south-west, and includes as foreign minister Mr

Babagana Kingibe, interior minister Mr Alex Ibru and education minister Dr Iyorchia Ayu.

The finance minister, Mr K I Kulu, served in the same post in the mid-1980s, earning respect as an advocate of market reforms. Together with Mr Paul Ogwuana, a recent appointment as central bank governor, Mr Don Ekebeti, who is retained from the interim government as oil minister, and Mr Adamu Chima, another former finance minister, Gen Abacha has an economic team which, if allowed free rein, could achieve reforms that western creditors are seeking.

Medellín drug chief may surrender to authorities

By Sarita Kandel in Bogotá

The flight of Pablo Escobar's family from Colombia has fuelled speculation that the Medellín drug chief is about to surrender again to the authorities.

Escobar has been on the run since he escaped from jail 16 months ago.

Last week the prosecutor general said official protection for Escobar's wife and children would be withdrawn. Recently an anti-tank rocket was fired at the family flat and there have been numerous attacks on Escobar's property and associates.

Family members were

allowed to fly to Germany yesterday, but it appeared they would be sent back to Colombia if no other country offered them asylum.

A recent attempt by other relations to find asylum in Chile also failed.

The German Interior Ministry said the family members, who were questioned by police for four hours, were not welcome and would not be allowed to enter Germany.

Local television and radio in Bogotá had said the family's departure to a refuge abroad was part of an arrangement with the government that included the surrender of Escobar.

With the discovery of dozens of his hideouts and the loss of so many of his henchmen following an extensive police hunt, it has become difficult for Escobar to stay ahead of the authorities.

Most of those who escaped from jail with him have either been recaptured or killed - but Escobar clearly has enough supporters to shelter him.

Although the Medellín cartel no longer has the structure to deal and transport huge volumes of cocaine, Pablo Escobar is still a powerful figure whose recapture, surrender or death would have enormous symbolic importance for the government.

INTERNATIONAL PRESS REVIEW

Japan

Capital punishment made a rare appearance in the Japanese press highlighting the new fashion for public debate of sensitive matters symbolised by the open style of the Hosokawa government.

Reports by Amnesty International and other human rights groups in the Daily Yomiuri and Japan Times say that up to four convicted murderers were hanged on Friday, the first executions under the new government. The most recent executions were in March, when three were hanged.

Curiously, as the Japan Times points out, Japanese law only allows the death penalty if it is not "arbitrary", an ambiguity which gives human rights groups a field day. Just as oddly, the Justice Ministry never announces executions, beyond telephoning families a day later, in an attempt to keep hangings out of the press. Neither do the authorities inform those on death row, so they live every day thinking the end is imminent.

On this, the government is a secretive as ever, despite the Hosokawa effect. The information only comes out thanks to Amnesty's diligence in keeping in touch with families of those under penalty of death, of which 55 remain.

Amnesty admits in the Yomiuri that it still had difficulty over the weekend in persuading people to sign petitions against capital punishment. Still, the coverage accorded to the executions by the normally compliant Japanese press, could indicate emergence of public opinion on the subject.

Serbia

In Vojvodina, the Belgrade daily in the grip of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, is to be believed, UN sanctions on Serbia-Yugoslavia will be lifted any day now.

Headlines promise Serbs a swift improvement of the grim economic



Bosnian mother and child: hoping for an end to war

situation, heralding a "winter without sanctions". The United Nations 18 months ago imposed sanctions, including an oil embargo, on Belgrade for supporting the violent partition of Bosnia.

But now, the biggest circulation newspaper, boasts how Serbia has been vindicated, with the west finally coming round to the Serbian side. There is no mention that sanctions will be lifted only if Bosnian Serbs hand over land to their Muslim foes.

The alleged promise to allow the delivery of heating oil and petrol to Serbia coincides with parliamentary elections due to be held on December 19.

While the independent newspaper

Borba or weekly Vreme more realistically inform Serbian readers on the current chances for a peace settlement and lifting of sanctions, few people can afford to buy them. Recent surveys indicated only 5 per cent of the population buy newspapers; most people rely on the seemingly omnipotent Television Serbia for information. Pro-Milosevic papers are heavily subsidised by the cash-strapped government.

Loath to miss an opportunity to demonise their independent competition, Belgrade press under Mr Milosevic dismissed their rivals as "traitors to Serbia" when Borba and Vreme recently received a badly-needed delivery of newsprint and other supplies from the

European Community Humanitarian Organisation (ECHO).

Germany

Mr Stefan Heilmann, Chancellor Helmut Kohl's chosen candidate for the presidency, might finally believe the gods are on his side. He and his aides were dressing the day after his decision to pull out of the race for the country's highest office. But the media has been distracted by scandal in the state government of Saxony-Anhalt in eastern Germany.

Finding a consensus candidate for the presidency after the resignation of Mr Heilmann, an east German, ran a close second in yesterday's papers - from West to East - to the story about the resignation of the Saxony-Anhalt cabinet.

But the press has made clear it is not getting at the east Germans; in fact, it is the West, the west Germans, who come in for stick, since the key positions in Saxony-Anhalt's government are held by west Germans. This seems to rule out the conspiracy theory, held by many in the east German press, that all Ostis are seen by their western counterparts as incompetent and ineffectual.

The fact that any notion of a media conspiracy against Ostis might be misplaced can be of little comfort to Mr Heilmann. It has been clear in the press in the past three weeks that the governing Christian Democratic Union, which endorsed him as its presidential candidate, was getting cold feet.

The conservative Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung has been cheering for Mr Roman Herzog, president of the constitutional court. Not just because he is more careful and articulate than Mr Heilmann; but because the CDU's rank and file were fed up with the way Mr Kohl and Mr Peter Hain, general secretary of the CDU, had fumbled the Saxony party without any discussion. By early last week, publications ranging from the weekly Stern magazine and the liberal daily

Süddeutsche Zeitung to the left-wing Frankfurter Rundschau were all in agreement that it was time for Mr Heilmann to go.

The east German press has expressed anger about the way Mr Heilmann was fobbed upon them too, and the way the campaign discredited the presidency. In a sober leader, the Dresden-based Sächsische Zeitung said it was time to reject the damage. This would probably mean Mr Kohl forgoing his chance to have an Osti - and a subservient one at that. It wrote: "Ostkandidat Ake" - eastern candidate, Ake!

United States

The ground of American culture shifted last week as America's most powerful theatre critic wrote his last review. Mr Frank Rich, who for 13 years has been the New York Times' chief theatre critic, will leave that position on Wednesday to become columnist for the Times, an appointment which is among the highest honours for a Times staffer. Mr Rich, who is 44, will write a twice-weekly column on American society and culture.

Mr Rich has been replaced as chief theatre critic by Mr David Richards, 53, who has served as the Times' Sunday theatre critic since 1980, after nine years as theatre critic of the Washington Post.

The position of Times chief theatre critic is traditionally a powerful one which, under Mr Rich's tenure, has taken on new heights of influence. Though his name has been largely reserved among theatre folk, he seemed the respect of his colleagues in the press: local and national coverage of his move has been surprisingly decorous.

Press and theatre community alike are adopting a walk-and-see attitude towards Mr Richards, whose graceful writing is widely admired.

Contributors: William Dawkins in Tokyo, Laura Silber in Belgrade, Judy Dempsey in Berlin, and Karen Ficker in New York



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27/11/93

● McGuinness talks of 'weekly' exchange ● Ministers fear tension could be heightened

Dublin and unionists knew of IRA contact

By Tim Cooney

The furore over the British government's admission of secret contacts with Sinn Féin, the political wing of the Irish Republican Army, was tempered by the disclosure yesterday that the Irish government, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), knew meetings were taking place.

The first contact between UK officials and Sinn Féin, which is seeking a united Ireland and the withdrawal of British troops from Ulster, took place in September 1990 at the request of the British government, according to the republican party.

Mr Martin McGuinness, the Sinn Féin chief of staff, told BBC Television yesterday that this meeting led "fairly intense contact between the British government representatives

and ourselves and culminated this year in intensive contacts".

He said "face-to-face" dialogue was halted in July this year at the time of the House of Commons vote on the Maastricht treaty - inferring such links might have compromised the UUP's crucial support for the government over closer European ties.

Mr McGuinness said that since the vote contact has continued since "on a weekly basis and sometimes on a daily basis".

Mr Ken Maginnis, the deputy leader of the UUP, said yesterday: "It is my understanding that for some time the IRA has been talking about a ceasefire and has spelt out its price for that."

He said that the UUP knew these contacts had been taking place since last March, and that through "on-going liaison" with the government "by

June we suspected what was happening".

It was then that Mr James Molyneux, the UUP leader, "made his feelings known to the prime minister", he said, and contact with Mr McGuinness was broken, before the Maastricht vote in July.

Mr Maginnis said the UUP's position since then, has been to offer a seat at the negotiating table to Sinn Féin in return for a verifiable cessation of violence. "We didn't stick our necks out without knowing what we are dealing with," he said.

The Rev Willie McCrea MP, of the Democratic Unionist Party, said yesterday that the DUP has had "documentary evidence" of the British government-IRA contacts for the past four weeks.

Sources, meanwhile, within Sinn Féin said Mr Gerry Adams, the party

leader, decided to make the contacts public two weeks ago, because of leaks by unionist politicians and to repudiate a statement by Mr John Major that it "would turn his stomach" to talk to the IRA.

The Irish government was yesterday playing down its own knowledge of the contacts. A government spokesman said only "it is up to the parties concerned to comment".

However, Mr Albert Reynolds, the Irish prime minister, hinted in the Irish parliament (Dail) earlier this month that his government had been having its own contacts with Sinn Féin.

This was later confirmed by Mr Brian Lenihan, chairman of the Irish parliament's foreign affairs committee. A week ago he was quoted in a Dublin weekly newspaper saying that the Irish government had contacts

with Sinn Féin "through intermediaries" and had been aware for some time of similar contacts by the British government.

"Contact has been going on for months... The contact is not immediate but the government is aware that contacts are made. Messages are received and are passed on. If we are to achieve peace, these contacts are necessary," he said.

Mr Lenihan, who is a senior figure in the ruling Fianna Fail party said: "We must realise the importance of contact between the two governments on the one hand and paramilitaries on the other. This does not put obstacles in the way of the constitutional parties. In fact, the two efforts complement each other... History is a record of coming to terms with terrorists and getting them to embrace the democratic process".

IRA history littered with failed talks

The history of the IRA's campaign is littered with abandoned initiatives between serving politicians and republican leaders, writes Richard Donkin.

Discussions since the early 1970s have been veiled in secrecy because of the sensitivity of the Unionists and successive Irish governments.

Lord Wilson, when leader of the Labour opposition met IRA leaders in Dublin in 1971 and again the following year in England. But the most direct formal talks between a government and republicans came in June 1972 when Lord White-law, as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, held abortive talks on a ceasefire with republican leaders.

During 1974 and 1975, under the then Labour government, senior officials regularly met Sinn Féin leaders at Laneside, a large government-owned house to the east of Belfast.

Informal and formal meetings alike have generally caused unease in Ireland. Mr Garret Fitzgerald said in his memoirs: "The contacts that had taken place had had the effect merely of prolonging violence by deluding the IRA into believing that a British government would eventually negotiate a settlement."

Major embarks on damage limitation

The Sinn Féin 'talks' have given ammunition to the government's critics, writes Philip Stephens

Mr John Major's administration has been severely embarrassed by the revelations of its contacts with Sinn Féin, the political wing of the paramilitary group held responsible for much of the carnage over the last 25 years.

Although there is nothing new about contacts between British governments and representatives of Sinn Féin, the disclosure of the latest links has fuelled criticism of Mr Major's handling of policy in Northern Ireland.

The prime minister and his government faced a barrage of criticism at the weekend after months of painstaking efforts to nurture a climate of reassurance to allow the resumption of talks on a political settlement in the province.

Opposition leaders joined hard-line Ulster unionists in accusing Mr Major and Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary, of lies at worst and skilful duplicity at best.

Mr Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party appeared confident that it now had the ammunition to blow up efforts by London and Dublin to agree a constitutional framework for Ulster which would marginalise the terrorists. But Mr Kevin McNamara, the opposition Labour party's spokesman on Northern Ireland, suggested there was no serious ques-

tionmark over Sir Patrick's integrity.

British ministers acknowledged the disclosure of the talks - just a week after the damaging leak in Dublin of the Irish government's draft proposals for a political settlement - would poison further the atmosphere of distrust which permeates Northern Ireland politics.

Downing Street insisted that no direct lies had been told. Mr Major's constant disavowal of negotiations or talks with Sinn Féin was technically accurate. Replies through intermediaries were not quite the same thing.

That, in the famous words of a former cabinet secretary, is what is known as being economical with the truth.

But Mr Major hopes the publication later today of all the documents which passed between his government and Sinn Féin will begin to repair the damage.

Significantly, the message from Downing Street was that he had fully approved the contacts and would stand firmly by Sir Patrick.

The prime minister would also press ahead with efforts to end the violence and to put in place a durable political settle-

ment.

Officials said the documents would show that the government had been as constant in its approach in private as in public. It had offered a place at the negotiating table to Sinn Féin, but only after a permanent end of violence.

Government officials were unapologetic about the contacts - Mr Major's view was that the government not possibly ignore the possibility that the IRA was serious about an end to violence.

That possibility was taken seriously by British intelligence and by the Irish government and Mr John Hume, the leader of Ulster's mainly Catholic and nationalist SDLP.

As one British official said recently most of the terrorist organisations which plagued the West since the 1970s - from the Red Brigades to the PLO - had given up.

Even Libya appeared reluctant now to sponsor terrorists. So "We have to allow for the possibility that the IRA has had enough".

Sir Patrick hopes that the mainstream Ulster Unionists led by Mr James Molyneux will accept the contacts did not amount to anything approach-

ing a conspiracy to undercut the government's constitutional guarantee on the future of Ulster.

His fear must be that if the DUP led Mr Paisley manages to take grassroots protestant opinion with him, then Mr Molyneux also will be dragged towards complete disavowal of a search for a comprehensive settlement.

There were one or two hopeful signs yesterday. Conservative MPs strongly committed to the preservation of Northern Ireland's place within the UK chose not to attack the prime minister. Mr Norman Lamont, the former chancellor of the exchequer, said it would have been wrong not to respond to the IRA. Mr Molyneux, briefed in advance of the revelation, appeared ready to reserve judgment.

But trust - or rather the absence of it - has always been the deciding factor in efforts to restore peace to Northern Ireland. No-one in London could argue that the latest revelations would not arouse further suspicion and hostility.

Mr Major and Mr Albert Reynolds, the Irish prime minister, will try to rebuild confidence at their forthcoming

Britain in brief



MoD plans house sale to offset cuts

Britain's Ministry of Defence (MoD) has drawn up plans to sell off almost 70,000 houses occupied by armed forces personnel to offset the deep cuts imposed by the Treasury in the £23bn defence budget.

The scheme, due to be announced as part of Tuesday's Budget, is expected to raise about £500m in the financial year beginning in April 1995. It is seen by ministers as a crucial element in attempts to fight off a threatened rebellion by backbench Tory MPs over the scale of forthcoming defence cuts.

It represents also the start of a new wave of new asset sales planned by government departments to square the circle of the sharpest squeeze for a decade on public spending with commitments to preserve crucial budgets.

Controversy over Levitt case

The Serious Fraud Office knew Mr Roger Levitt would not go to jail when it accepted the offer of a guilty plea by the disgraced financial services salesman in return for all other charges against him being dropped.

The SFO said on Friday that Mr Levitt's sentence of 180 hours of community service was a matter for the judge alone. Mr Levitt pleaded guilty to deceiving Fimbra, the insurance industry regulator, over the collapse of the Levitt Group with debts of £34m. Fraudulent trading carries a maximum seven-year jail term.

Sharp warning for Labour

A sharp warning that Britain's opposition Labour party risks relapsing into the complacency which has lost it the last four general elections is issued

today by the Fabian Society.

Ms Glenys Thornton, acting general secretary of the centrist Labour pressure group, says in a society pamphlet published today that the party's unwillingness to confront change threatens to paralyse attempts to create a strategy appropriate to the 1990s rather than the 1960s or 1970s.

In a thinly-veiled criticism of Mr John Smith's leadership, Mrs Thornton says Labour needed to build a political strategy which harnessed its traditional collective instincts to the cause of modernisation.

Job fears ease slightly

Fears among British workers that they might lose their jobs over the next 12 months fell slightly in November according to the latest MORI/IRS survey for the Financial Times.

Fear of redundancy and unemployment had risen sharply in the previous month to 53 per cent of those in full-time or part-time work. However, this month the figure fell-back to 47 per cent. Anxiety about prospects is most common among women, part-time workers and the young.

Bank launches credit card

MBNA, the US bank which recently set up its UK headquarters in Chester, has launched a credit card undercutting most of its rivals by at least four percentage points.

It is offering an introductory annualised percentage rate of just 13.9 per cent APR to those transferring the balance from their existing card to its UK Securis Visa cards. The rate is fixed until July 31 1994.

Last Durham pit to close

Miners at Wearmouth, the last pit in the Durham coalfield, voted yesterday to accept closure of their colliery, where British Coal halted production on Wednesday.

The closure, on December 10, will bring to an end deep mining in an area of north east England where coal has been dug for almost two thousand years.

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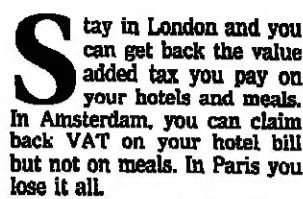
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THE BUSINESS TRAVELLER

Reclaiming VAT around Europe

Michael Skapinker looks at the obstacles to recovering taxes on business services



Stay in London and you can get back the value added tax you pay on your hotels and meals. In Amsterdam, you can claim back VAT on your hotel but not on meals. In Paris you lose it all.

Anyone who believes the single market and the European Union are established facts has never looked at the tortuous procedures business travellers have to go through to reclaim VAT on business services. In principle, someone travelling on business from one EU country to another can reclaim VAT spent on certain services. The first difficulty is establishing which services.

The UK and Germany are generous to business travellers, allowing them to reclaim VAT expended on hotels, car rental and other transport, petrol, meals, professional fees, conferences, trade shows and training courses. Countries such as France, Ireland and Italy are less open-handed. Most EU countries allow business travellers from outside the Union to reclaim VAT. Some, like Italy, do not allow non-EU citizens to reclaim unless their own countries offer reciprocal arrangements. For those who have managed to understand what can be reclaimed, the bureaucratic battle has only just begun.

Big expenditure items on which VAT is reclaimable in EC (%)									
Hotel	Car Rental	Petrol	Meals	Transport	Professional Fees	Conference	Trade Shows	Training Courses	
10	19.5	19.5	20	10	20	20	20	20	
-	-	25	-	-	19.5	6	19.5	-	
-	-	-	-	-	25	25	25	-	
15	15	15	15	7 or 15	18.8	18.8	18.8	18.8	
-	-	-	-	-	15	15	15	15	
-	-	-	-	-	21	21	21	21	
3	15	18	3	3	6	6	6	6	
6	17.5	17.5	6	6	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	
-	-	-	-	-	16	16	16	16	
15 or 16	15	15	15 or 16	-	15	15	15	15	
12	21	21	21	21	25	25	25	25	
17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	

*One half of VAT is eligible for reclaim

Source: Meridian VAT Reclaim

There is no central clearing house for VAT reclamation. Nor does the EU have a single working language. Applications in Denmark must be completed in Danish, in Greek in Greece and Dutch in the Netherlands.

Even then for those who do manage to fill in the forms in the correct language, there are traps everywhere. Among the most common is failing to get the right invoice for services; invoices must specify what VAT was paid.

Another mistake is to have an invoice made out to the company's subsidiary in the country in which the expense

was incurred. Instead, invoices must be made out to the company in the business traveller's home country.

Understandably, given the complications, many companies do not bother to reclaim. They write off VAT paid in another country as part of the cost of doing business abroad.

That was the attitude taken by management consultants Arthur D. Little until a year ago. William Stormont, a director of the consultancy, says: "Our travel bill was very large, but reclaiming VAT is a very labour intensive exercise. Understanding the attitudes in each of the countries was quite

a deterrent as far as we were concerned," he says.

The consultancy turned to Meridian VAT Reclaim, one of several companies now specialising in making claims. In one year, Arthur D. Little has received £4,500 back after commissions. Stormont admits it is not a fortune, but adds that every bit helps in these difficult times.

UK Customs and Excise publishes a VAT refunds booklet called notice 723. It is available free from HM Customs and Excise, VAT Overseas Repayments, Customs House, PO Box 34, Londonderry, Northern Ireland, BT48 7AE.

More than three years after discovering that the city end of the rail link between Rome's Fiumicino airport and the "city centre" was far from central, travellers will be pleased to learn that the service has finally penetrated Rome's heart.

The link, built for the 1990 soccer world cup, was always a disappointment to budget-conscious tourists, as trains stopped about a mile short of the city centre at the suburban station of Ostiense. The obligatory taxi ride into town added £10,000-£15,000 to the rail ticket, now £7,000 (£2.50).

That meant the journey was still only about one third the price of taking a taxi all 15 miles from Fiumicino, but added a great deal of inconvenience. Having to change from rail to taxi (or hike the 10 minutes to the nearest underground stop) meant Ostiense was a drag, particularly after the popular direct bus service from the airport to Rome's main Stazione Termini railway terminus was suspended soon after the new rail link opened.

Ostiense also acquired an unfortunate early stigma after many taxi drivers either boycotted the new terminal or made fictitious claims about "rail strikes" or "problems on the line" to persuade passengers to continue all the way to the airport.

Last Saturday everything changed. Now, 15 trains a day run non-stop between Fiumicino and Rome's Stazione Termini, in the heart of town. The



Straight to Rome's heart: trains now go to the city centre, within easy reach of St Peter's Square

Airport train finally reaches Rome's centre

new service, between 7am and 8.50pm, is costlier than its forerunner, at £12,000 one way. But the air conditioned and 1st class only coaches come as a godsend to those wanting to avoid venal taxi drivers or rush-hour traffic. Better still, Alitalia, Italy's state airline, has inaugurated four check-in and ticket desks alongside Stazione Termini's platform 22, from which the new service departs. Passengers with hand baggage only

can check in on the spot before hopping on the train for the 30-minute ride.

The only drawback with the new train is the frequency, only once-an-hour each way. Italy's state railways, which has already broken new ground with Alitalia by inaugurating new Florence-Fiumicino and Naples-Fiumicino services, claims a more frequent schedule is impossible owing to congestion. Meanwhile, the old rail link

continues as before, though the modernistic steel and marble air terminal at Ostiense has been closed. Travellers can still use the Ostiense suburban station on the other side of the tracks for the airport train. However, as it now continues to other suburban stops before terminating at Tiburtina to the east, it may be more convenient to alight elsewhere.

Haig Simonian

TRAVEL ADVICE

Disruption on way out of Italy

Italian air traffic controllers are expected to strike today and tomorrow for a couple of hours early each morning. Flights leaving Italy are likely to be disrupted before midday, but airlines expect few delays for in-coming journeys.

BELGIUM: Difficulties caused by the general strike last week, which involved air traffic controllers, have now been solved. Flights of TAT, British Airways' French regional carrier, are expected to be back to normal following last week's delays caused by pilots' union meetings.

NIGERIA: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office says the political situation remains

uncertain. There is a high incidence of street crime and armed robberies, especially in Lagos and southern states. Travelling outside cities after dark is unsafe.

EL SALVADOR: Although the civil war has ended, there is still lawlessness. Many victims are being murdered in the course of robberies, especially where they resist. Travellers should be advised to contact the British Embassy (98-1763, 98-1768 or 98-1455) for the latest news.

CHINA: China remains generally a safe place, but muggings in the main cities and sexual

harassment are increasing. Visitors should guard their money and valuables in public areas. Women travelling alone should be careful.

Our limited representation and the poor local communications make it hard to guarantee quick help for citizens in difficulty outside Beijing (especially in Tibet). Those travelling outside Beijing should make a note of the full address, telephone and telex numbers of the British Embassy, Beijing, and the British Consulate General, Shanghai.

MONGOLIA: Visitors travelling through or to Mongolia must have a valid visa and register with the police

authorities after their arrival.

Street crime is rising. Visitors should remain vigilant and not travel alone off the main streets of any town. Wherever possible use regular taxis.

Domestic flight schedules are uncertain because of shortages of aviation fuel and a lack of advance booking facilities. There are also doubts as to aircraft safety because of poor servicing.

Additional information from Travel Advice Unit, Consular Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Clive House, Petty France, London SW1H 8ED. Tel: 071-370-4122.

LIKELY WEATHER IN THE LEADING BUSINESS CENTRES

	Tokyo	Hong Kong	London	Frankfurt	New York	Los Angeles	Milan	Paris	Zurich
Monday	18	24	4	2	8	20	4	1	5
Tuesday	15	26	5	3	8	19	1	8	1
Wednesday	15	24	10	0	7	18	2	2	0
Thursday	20	24	6	2	9	20	5	4	1
Friday	14	23	9	5	12	22	7	6	1

Maximum temperatures in Celsius

Information supplied by Meteo Consult of the Netherlands

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WHERE TO WATCH THE FT THIS WEEK

MONDAY

06:30 European Business Today†
07:15 European Business Today†
12:30 FT Reports†
22:30 European Business Today†

TUESDAY

06:30 European Business Today†
07:15 European Business Today†
07:45 FT Reports*
12:30 West of Moscow†
Petting the Bear. Will further EC concessions to Russia damage business in Western Europe?

13:15 FT Reports*

15:45 FT Reports*

18:45 FT Reports*

22:30 European Business Today†

23:45 FT Reports*

WEDNESDAY

06:30 European Business Today†
07:15 European Business Today†
12:30 FT Reports†
22:30 European Business Today†

THURSDAY

06:30 European Business Today†
07:15 European Business Today†
07:45 West of Moscow*
12:30 West of Moscow†
13:15 West of Moscow*
15:45 West of Moscow*
18:45 West of Moscow*

21:30 FT Reports†
Tunnel Vision. Will Britain lose competitive edge by failing to link up to the Channel tunnel?

Also featuring:

EUROPE BUSINESS MONITOR

a survey of leading business opinion across Europe.

(For your copy of the Executive Summary call: 44 (0) 245 493646)

22:30 European Business Today†

FRIDAY

06:30 European Business Today†
07:15 European Business Today†
12:30 FT Reports†
20:30 FT Reports†
22:30 European Business Today†

SATURDAY

03:30 West of Moscow*
13:30 West of Moscow*

SUNDAY

17:30 FT Reports*
22:30 FT Reports†
04:30 FT Reports*

(If viewing in the UK deduct one hour.)
KEY • Sky News † Super Channel
* Euronews

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27 Nov 1993

THE BUSINESS TRAVELLER

Cathay Pacific closes door on latecomers

Daniel Green reports on an airline's pursuit of punctuality

Travellers leaving Hong Kong on Cathay Pacific should consult their watches more closely than usual. The carrier has introduced a "doors close on time" policy in an effort to reduce the number of late departures suffered by just about every airline at the crowded airport.

The principle is that the check-in desk closes half an hour before scheduled departure. The gate shuts with 10 minutes to go.

Passengers arriving after the deadline will not be allowed on board. Anyone who has checked in but not arrived at the gate 10 minutes before departure will have their luggage taken off the aircraft - the latest computer labelling technology allows the bags to be found quickly.

The problem Cathay is trying

ing to solve is that delays on long-haul flights out of Hong Kong can easily be an hour or more. If the take-off slot is missed, one late passenger can leave the other 400 people on a Boeing 747 sitting on the tarmac for an hour or more.

Left behind

"Some passengers have been lulled into feeling they can turn up at the last minute for flights. They would not turn up like that for a bullet train from Tokyo to Osaka, or for a theatre performance," says Mr Tony Tyler, general manager of Cathay Pacific Europe.

"We are going to upset some people but the silent majority will applaud us."

The scheme's first few months of operation have seen punctuality improved dramati-

cally, and 300 passengers left behind in Hong Kong.

No one left at the departure gate has complained, claims Mr Tyler. He admits, though, that some people trying to check-in less than 30 minutes before scheduled departure were upset at being barred from the flight.

"At Hong Kong's Kai Tak airport, there is no way they could get from check-in to the aircraft in time," he explains.

Cathay may be facing a lone struggle to persuade the temporarily challenged to change their ways. British Airways, which also flies from Hong Kong, will not be following Cathay's lead.

"We have a very good punctuality record," insists BA. "We see no reason to change our policy."

Tips on tipping at the table in London

Nicholas Lander offers an answer to a perennial riddle

How big a tip should you leave in a UK restaurant? Many British diners are unsure and visitors from countries with fixed service charges are often completely bewildered.

There is no uniformity to the service charges in UK restaurants. Restaurateurs offer a bewildering set of options at the bottom of their bills.

These fall into four main categories:

● Prices include service and VAT. In the UK, all menu prices include VAT by law. But the phrase "service and VAT included", the one most commonly used in the rest of Europe, usually appears only in hotel restaurants and coffee shops and the most expensive restaurants.

Even in the latter, pay attention. One of London's finest restaurants, La Tante Claire, quotes service inclusive prices

but then, when you pay with a credit card, incorporates the latter at the top of the slip but leaves the service box empty making it very easy for you to pay the service charge twice.

This is an iniquitous habit that can prove very costly to the business traveller.

● A percentage called "service" appears on the bottom of your bill. The percentage must be displayed on the menu (10, 12.5 or 15 per cent). This is an expensive system for the restaurateur because National Insurance contributions have to be paid on this additional amount. For this reason it is usually replaced by

● "Optional service charge". A misleading phrase because you are often left feeling that it is not optional at all. It is as criticised by the Department of Trade and Industry but is sadly only too common.

● "Service charge is not included, gratuities at the customers' discretion". This is the phrase used by a large number of restaurants and one that creates confusion and embarrassment for the customer.

Whichever system is adopted, almost every UK restaurant today pools all tips and service charges and then shares them out on a points system (based on experience and ability) to the waiting staff via their wage packets.

There is no advantage in leaving cash other than in small restaurants or as an extra appreciation of excellent service.

Many restaurants are trying to raise the service charge to 15 per cent but this, unless the service is exceptional, is excessive. If service is optional, 12.5 per cent is an adequate reward for attentive service.

DIVIDEND & INTEREST PAYMENTS

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Alfred Holt Bldg. Ltd. FRN 8271.25

Avonbridge 1.2p

Bank of Montreal C80.28

Blackpool 0.5p

Blue Circle Inds. 3.75p

Do. 10.14% Bds. 2013 2537.30

Chrysler Fin. 15.14% Bds. '94 5882.5

Chubb Secur. Power 0.7% Bds. '01

YH2500

Daily News Int'l (Bermuda Reg.) 30.0155

Do. (Jersey Reg.) 30.0165

De. (Hong Kong Reg.) H330.113815

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THE WEEK AHEAD

DIVIDEND & INTEREST PAYMENTS

■ TODAY

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NFL (1) Secs. Def. Int. Mtg. Backed FRN

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Do. Class A5 '93 C182.05

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Do. Class A5

THE MONDAY People page

A belief in the power of reason

Louis Schweitzer tells Kevin Done and John Ridding about the Renault/Volvo debate

Louis Schweitzer, the chairman of Renault, likes to have a sense of direction in his life.

It served him well during his rapid rise through the elite ranks of the French civil service - he was chief of staff to Laurent Fabius when he was prime minister in the mid-1980s - and by the middle of last year it had brought him to the top of the French state-owned car group.

But for several weeks he has been left twisting in the wind as Volvo, Renault's Swedish partner, has been forced to endure a shareholder rebellion which threatens a planned merger between the two groups.

Shareholder resistance has already forced Volvo to postpone a vote on the deal. Investors will now deliver their verdict on December 7.

The merger is one of the most ambitious ever attempted in the auto industry. It would also remove Swedish control of the country's biggest industrial group at a time when the country is already gripped by self-doubt, and is teetering on the edge of joining the European Union.

Schweitzer is a keen theatre-goer, but he refuses to draw any business lessons from his recent attendance at a performance of *The Persians* - Aeschylus' account of how the Persians invaded Greece only to be humbled and sent packing.

"It is in everyone's best interests that Volvo should not lose its identity, nor its homelands. That would be crazy, that would not be sound management. You must keep a strong base in Sweden, technically and in manufacturing."

Schweitzer is clear that a no-vote from Volvo's shareholders would not only rule out a full merger but, just as important, it would jeopardise the existing far-reaching alliance between the two groups consummated in January 1991 with the exchange of sizeable cross-shareholdings.

"If there is a no, it is clear that the momentum that makes people co-operate would be lost. The momentum

would disappear. You cannot work together without a sense of direction and there would be none," he says.

Leaning back in his chair against a backdrop of modern art and model cars Schweitzer still appears at ease in the face of such high stakes. But the challenges of the merger represent unfamiliar territory. The leader of a state-owned industry, he is confronted with a rebellion by small shareholders and institutions. A man of reason, he has become embroiled in an increasingly emotional debate in which he believes the facts have become increasingly obscured.

The scale of the opposition from Swedish shareholders has caught Schweitzer by surprise. "The debate became rather emotional. It became so loud it was deafening and the issues were not being addressed."

Schweitzer's response has been to argue his case as passionately as possible. In a series of interviews with Swedish television and newspapers and frequent visits to Volvo, the Renault chairman has sought to provide reassurance on the principal points of resistance to the deal: the timetable for privatisation of the merged group, and the French government's retention of a golden share in the new company.

He has emphasised the industrial logic of the deal which he regards as vital for both companies in the face of the increasingly competitive international automobile industry. Economies of scale, shared buying and R&D expenditure are necessary, he says, to help ease the burdens of new product developments.

Having made his case, he now stands firm. "This is it, it is decision time," he says. "We have presented a fair deal. Feelings sometimes overcome reasoning in a debate, now I hope that reasoning can overcome the emotions."

The emphasis on the power of reason to win an argument reflects his background and education. Like other "seniors" - graduates of the Ecole Nationale d'Administration, the training



PERSONAL FILE

Born: Geneva 1942

Educated: Ecole Nationale d'Administration, Paris

Academic qualifications: graduated in law; Diploma from l'Institut d'Etudes Politiques

Career:

1970: Inspecteur des Finances

1981: chief of staff to Laurent Fabius

1982: Professor at l'Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris

1992: Renault's chief executive officer, chairman of the board

ground for the elite of the French government service - Schweitzer has a training in logic and debate. "He has an excellent analytical mind," says Pehr Gyllenhammar, Volvo's chairman.

It is not easy, however, for Schweitzer to put his message across. "It is not natural for Renault to go to AB Volvo shareholders. I have no reason to say I know Swedish shareholders better than Volvo does."

If all goes to plan, however, they will become his shareholders from the beginning of January. As head of the industrial operations of the merged company, Schweitzer will be in charge of its day-to-day operations. Later in the year it is due to be privatised.

But how will a product of the French administration and public sector industry adjust to the private sector? In particular, how will he deal with restive Swedish shareholders?

Schweitzer is sanguine about the prospect. "It is one of the peculiarities of the French system that this happens," he says, pointing to the experience of Jacques Calvet, the head of rival car builder Peugeot-Citroen, and Michel Pebereau, head of Banque Nationale de Paris which was successfully privatised last month. Both had backgrounds in financial administration.

Moreover, Schweitzer argues that Renault has long been operating as a private sector company. "The real change occurred in 1986 when Georges

Besse (then chairman) declared that Renault should aim to become the most profitable European volume car-maker. "That was achieved last year," says Schweitzer. "Renault will stay profitable throughout this recession," he claims. "That will be the ultimate test - that in the worst downturn in history we can still make money. I think that is rather commendable."

As for shareholders, even restive Swedish ones, Schweitzer is relaxed. "Obviously there is a difference between having one shareholder or 1,000 shareholders, but management principles remain the same." He argues that sensitive decisions such as those relating to expanding or closing plants will be taken on commercial grounds and would not be put to shareholders.

If the merger does not go through, Schweitzer believes the challenges would be the same, but harder to deal with. "All debates leave scars, and the scars would remain. We would have to turn to limited partnerships with other groups, which could give some solution to the problem of insufficient volumes." He points to the existing collaboration with Peugeot in V6 engines and gearboxes. "But it wouldn't be as good."

The delays of recent weeks are already a source of irritation. A product of France's fast track, Schweitzer believes in moving quickly. "Speed is of the essence," he said when the merger was announced. A no vote in eight days' time would force him to pull over to the slow lane.

Internationally...

How Dede Brooks made a bid for Sotheby's summit

The rise and rise of Diana D. Brooks has reached its only possible summit - this 43-year-old banker, invariably known as Dede, now runs Sotheby's, the world's largest fine art auction house, which next year celebrates 250 years of existence, writes Antony Thornicroft.

Last week it was announced that she was taking over from Michael Altmann as president and chief executive officer of Sotheby's Holdings. Only Alfred Taubman, the chairman and chief shareholder, wields more power and his major concern has always been his shopping mall empire. Despite its prestige, Sotheby's is little more than a diversion for Taubman.

Dede Brooks (top right) joined Sotheby's in 1979 from Citibank. Her skills were first devoted to the financial side in New York and she masterminded the deals which brought to Sotheby's such lucrative estates as the impressionist pictures of the late Doris Havemeyer. But remorselessly she snapped up the top managerial jobs and only last April was made president and ceo of Sotheby's international auction business.

Since then she has been touring the world, spending much time in London which, both for historical and geographical reasons, is vital for Sotheby's future. New York may have replaced London as the main auction centre, but London is the key to Europe; and it is on the continent, as well as in the Far East, that Sotheby's seeks growth.

Her final apotheosis is not expected to limit Dede Brooks' travelling. A tall, lively woman, who somehow manages to enjoy a happy marriage to a venture capitalist and look after two children, she has boundless energy and enthusiasm. She likes to mix freely with her



staff and is totally lacking in side or superiority. Her own art collection is eclectic - ranging from antiquities to Latin American art.

Dede Brooks' timing at reaching the top could prove impeccable. Sotheby's has been hit badly by the recession, and in its nine months' figures for 1993 it was still registering a loss. But recent successful jewels auctions in Switzerland and art sales in New York should ensure a profit in the final quarter of the year. It is a smaller Sotheby's work force that Dede Brooks leads but all the signs are that she will oversee an upturn in its fortunes.

Sinegal's extensive cut-price philosophy

A mixed reception awaits Jim Sinegal, 57-year-old American founder of the Costco cut-price retailing chain, when he arrives in London today for the opening of Britain's first warehouse club, writes Richard Tomkins. Shoppers may be delighted at the impact he will have on British retailing. Other store chains would sooner he had stayed at home.

Doubtless the controversy is something Sinegal would have preferred to avoid, for as one of the less flamboyant US business executives, he shuns publicity. He is also unusual in extending the cut-price philosophy to his own role in the company: notoriously, his desk is out in the middle of the work area at Costco's Seattle headquarters, separated from the rest of the workspace only by a low divider, and he answers his own phone. His salary is just \$514,547 - a

pittance for the boss of a company with annual sales exceeding \$16bn.

The low profile notwithstanding, few make the mistake of under-estimating Sinegal. For 23 years he worked for Sol Price, the man who invented the warehouse club concept when he set up the Price Co chain in 1976. Sinegal looked an upstart when he decided to go his own way and set up Costco in 1983. But Costco emerged as the most successful operator in the field, and earlier this year proved the point by taking over Price Co - though Sinegal, true to form, had the grace to call it a merger.

Attali's soft landing at Banque Arjil

Bernard Attali, the ex-head of Air France, who recently fell from government grace when his austerity plan for the loss-making state carrier provoked a bitter strike, has parachuted comfortably into the job of chairing the supervisory board of Banque Arjil, an investment bank controlled by Jean-Luc Lagardere and his Matra-Hachette conglomerate, writes David Buchanan.

Attali's arrival at Banque Arjil was far more gentlemanly than his departure from Air France, and was apparently at the suggestion of the person he is replacing at the investment bank, his old friend, Philippe Camus. The latter decided he could do without the banking job and devote more time to the two more senior posts he occupies in the Lagardere empire - director general of Matra-Hachette, and head of the Lagardere group's financial committee.

Interested though he may be in finance - he headed the GAN insurance group before going to Air France - Bernard Attali will hardly find the part-time supervisory job at Banque Arjil fully occupying. He might therefore find time to write up his airline experiences. After all, instant books run in the family. Twin brother Jacques is rumoured to be hammering away at his memoirs on his ill-starred time in London at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM SÜMER HOLDİNG A.Ş.

As a part of the privatization programme Sümer Holding A.Ş. offers for sale its Antalya Cotton Textile Joint Stock Company by sealed tender and sale negotiations procedure.

THE PLANT TO BE SOLD	SHARE CAPITAL OF THE COMPANY (1000 TL)	PERCENTAGE OF SHARES SUBJECT FOR SALE (%)	NOMINAL VALUE OF SHARES (1000 TL)	AMOUNT OF BID BOND (1000 TL)
ANTALYA Cotton Textile Joint Stock Company (Antalya Pamuklu Dokuma Sanayi T.A.Ş.)	22.800.000	88.36	20.146.500	3.000.000

- The Information Document and sale specifications of the above company is available for a fee of TL 250.000, at the General Directorate of Sümer Holding A.Ş., at the address below.
- The offerors are required to provide an irrevocable, unconditional (payable at first demand) tender bond for an amount of 3.000.000.000 Turkish Liras and valid for a period of at least six months to the below address of the General Directorate. Offers prepared in compliance with the sale specifications should be submitted to the Correspondence Department of Sümer Holding A.Ş. General Directorate at Cankun Caddesi No: 2 Ulus/ANKARA, not later than 3 P.M. on January 20, 1994. Delays in post shall not be accepted.
- Sümer Holding A.Ş. is not subject to the restrictions specified in the State Tender Law No. 2886 dated 8th September 1983 and reserves the right to decide whether or not to sell the plant and to extend the deadline of the tender, if deems necessary.

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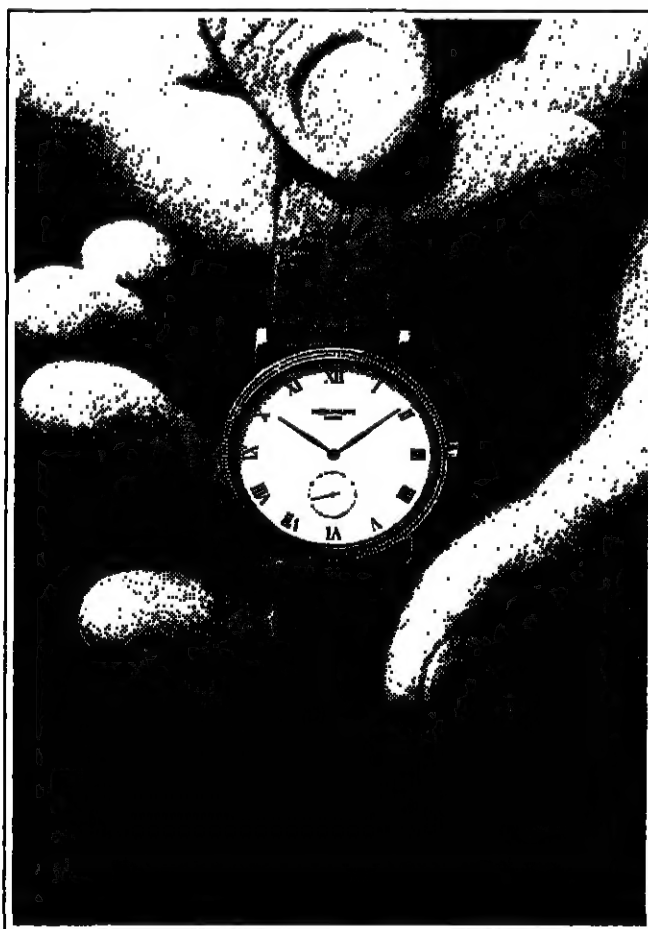
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November 29, 1993

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FINANCIAL TIMES SURVEY

DENMARK

With a 12 per cent unemployment rate, Denmark is seeking to expand its economy by large-scale public works. Its Social Democrat-led coalition is also pledged to keep taxes low and to protect the country's cherished welfare state. **Hugh Carnegie reports**

Descending with a bump

After a heady year in the international headlines, Denmark is facing grim reality again.

A referendum in May to accept the Maastricht Treaty creating the European Union, reversing a dramatic initial rejection in June 1992, brought to an end a period in which the country had enjoyed unaccustomed levels of attention as it held the future of the community in its hands.

Now, just as Denmark has slipped down the European agenda, so has the issue of Europe been supplanted at home by the more mundane but daunting problems of a faltering economy, an unemployment rate of some 12 per cent of the workforce and the strains these have placed on the country's highly-developed welfare state.

Nor are more cheerful diversions in view: earlier this month, the Danish football team failed to qualify for next summer's World Cup Finals in the US, shattering the national euphoria which followed its unexpected victory in the European championship a few weeks after the first Maastricht referendum.

In tune with the change in mood, the four-party coalition of Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, led by his Social Democratic Party, has made the regeneration of economic growth and "bending down the curve" of unemployment the over-riding aim of the government.

The government, which includes the Centre Demo-

cratic Party, the Radical Liberal Party and the Christian People's Party, took office in January following the collapse of a Conservative-Liberal coalition led by Mr Poul Schlüter. Mr Schlüter had held together a non-socialist government for 10 years but was finally forced to resign in the face of a scandal over the treatment of a group of Tamil refugees in which he was found by a judicial inquiry to have misled the Folketing (parliament).

With Denmark at the time holding the presidency of the European Community, Mr Nyrup Rasmussen's initial priority was to ensure the approval of Maastricht in the second referendum, held after Denmark won a series of opt-outs from the treaty's provisions at the EC's December summit in Edinburgh. But the Social Democrats, many of whose own supporters were anti-Maastricht, had no special enthusiasm for the loftier goals of European Union.

Since the referendum was won, the government has been happy to let slip the issues of institutional reform within the EU, preferring not to return to them in earnest until the next Intergovernmental Conference in 1995. Instead, Mr Nyrup Rasmussen has advocated that the EU concentrate on the issues that are also his chief domestic concern - how to engender growth and tackle unemployment.

At home, the change in government did not produce any change in Denmark's dogged determination to maintain the



Young Danes in Copenhagen's Tholth Gardens after a year in which the country voted first against, and then for, the Maastricht Treaty. There is a sense of anticlimax as they contemplate the challenges of a faltering economy.

value of the krone as an anchor that has helped achieve an inflation rate of just over one per cent. Although granted exemption from the goal of European Monetary Union under the Edinburgh accords, the coalition is committed to making the krone a core currency when new arrangements for the European Monetary System are eventually made.

In spite of repeated speculative buffeting during Europe's currency turbulence of the past year, and some damage to exports, Mr Nyrup Rasmussen's government has spurned the devaluation route taken by Sweden and the UK, two of Denmark's most important export markets and competitors.

The krone was one of the currencies given a wider 15 per

cent ERM band in August, but has since fallen relatively little against the D-Mark and interest rates have fallen to their lowest levels in two decades. But the coalition has struck out on a markedly different economic path from its predecessor.

Backed by a large current account surplus and a low budget deficit, the government has adopted a policy - at least temporarily - of fiscal expansion.

In the summer it enacted Denmark's most far-reaching tax reforms for decades, cutting the top rate of income tax over the next five years from 68 per cent to about 63 per cent and the lowest rate from about 51 per cent to 43 per cent. These will be partly financed by "green taxes" on energy, water and packaging. Coupled with a

boost to public spending, targeted on infrastructure projects, the measures will inject a projected DKr12bn into the economy next year, equivalent to 1.3 per cent of gross domestic product.

This will inflate the budget deficit to about six per cent of GDP. But the government estimates it will push up GDP growth to 3.9 per cent in 1994 and start to achieve the target of turning round the relentless rise of unemployment.

At the same time, the coalition has pledged to defend and improve the welfare state, firmly rejecting the opposition argument that Denmark's high benefits and minimum wage levels are a barrier to employment growth. The government's approach has been to set up job-sharing and job-rotation schemes and to look to the extension of education and retraining but not to attack not the wage and benefits structure.

"The welfare state gives a security that makes people less afraid of changes. We really don't believe we would be better off with lower benefits," says Ms Karen Jespersen, the

minister for social affairs. The government parties are betting that this approach will be popular with voters and will pay off when the next general election is held, probably in the autumn of 1994.

The Social Democrats in particular have placed their faith in Denmark's traditional consensus around the maintenance of the welfare state. "I think people in Denmark very strongly want the welfare state," says Ms Jespersen. "Of course there is a dilemma when people call for tax cuts. But Danes accept you have to pay taxes to sustain the welfare system."

A better-than-expected performance by the Social Democrats in this month's local elections was seen within the party as evidence that it is on the right track. But it is facing sharp opposition from the centre-right opposition, spearheaded by the Liberal Party under Mr Uffe Ellemann Jensen, the fiery former foreign minister.

The Liberals have shot up in popularity since the change of government, notably among younger voters, overtaking the

Conservatives in the opinion polls as the main opposition party. The party made easily the biggest gains in the local elections. The Liberal aim is to achieve a Folketing majority with the Conservatives and the right-wing Progress Party at the general election.

Although clearly wary of stepping outside the "welfare consensus", it insists that the government is ducking vital structural reforms in the economy, has over-estimated its growth projections and risks pitching the country into a financial crisis such as it experienced in the early 1980s.

Mr Ellemann Jensen says the government has not grasped the seriousness of the threat to west European competitiveness from Asian economies and more especially from the low-cost emerging economies of central and eastern Europe. Beyond domestic economic policy, he is also sharply critical of the government for not playing a more active role in preparing the EU to meet this challenge. "Jobs are moving to the east - and they should be allowed to move to the east. But we have to accept

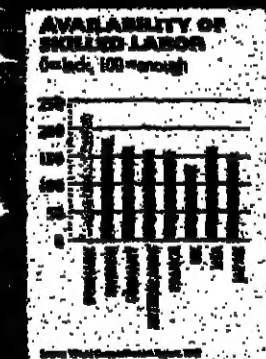
the changes in our systems. This calls for. We are reaching the point where the welfare system and the public sector risk tipping the boat."

These arguments find a strong echo in the industrial community. Mr Hans Skov Christensen, head of the Federation of Danish Industries, points out that the average wage in Poland of DKr6 per hour is under a 10th of the minimum wage of DKr65 per hour in Denmark. "We have to totally reconsider the system," he insists. "We need more wage flexibility to keep production here in areas where we are better, we need to improve the service sector and we need much more ambitious research and development efforts."

The signs are that Danish voters will be presented with a sharper choice of policy alternatives than they have been accustomed to when the election comes around. But if the coalition can indeed bend down the unemployment curve next year while sustaining the welfare state at present levels, the electorate is unlikely to prefer the harsher medicine prescribed by the opposition.

DENMARK

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POLITICS

Jobs are the biggest issue

When Mr Poul Nyrup Rasmussen was sworn in as Denmark's prime minister on January 26 this year, his election capped a meteoric rise through the political ranks by the former trade union economist.

A member of parliament since only 1988, Mr Nyrup Rasmussen took over at the head of the Social Democratic party in 1992 in a controversial but successful challenge to the leadership of Mr Svend Auken. Within nine months, the resignation of the Conservative-led coalition of Mr Poul Schlüter, which fell after 10 years in office amidst a scandal over the treatment of Tamil refugees, allowed the 49-year-old Mr Nyrup Rasmussen to form his own coalition with the small Radical Liberal, Centre Democrat and Christian People's parties.

With the aura more of a technocrat than a politician, he has sometimes seemed ill at ease in the prime ministerial hot seat. But once over the hurdle of last May's second referendum on the Maastricht Treaty establishing the European Union, he has waxed in confidence.

In a conversation with the FT, Mr Nyrup Rasmussen discussed the principal political challenge facing his government - how to tackle the double digit rate of unemployment while simultaneously fulfilling the Social Democratic pledge to defend and sustain Denmark's highly developed welfare state.

"You should never forget that our unemployment rate is caused firstly by the lowest business cycle comeback we have had for many, many years," he says. "We have not been in such a situation since the end of the 1960s. That is why I say that time is working for the government in that the economic growth rate is coming up now. Our so-called economic wise men evaluate that we will succeed in 1994 in forcing the unemployment curve down again. But it is a very long job. We can force it down in 1994 but it takes years to



Nyrup Rasmussen: at the top after only five years in parliament

reinforce employment." A big fiscal stimulus next year and a range of measures such as job rotation and job-sharing have been adopted by the government. But the prime minister firmly rejects the notion that the long term solu-

tion to unemployment lies in radical restructuring of Denmark's labour market, with its high jobless benefits and high minimum wage levels.

"I don't believe a bit in that argument, for many reasons. One is that it is not well documented that relatively high unemployment benefits have been a barrier to obtain jobs for the lower paid. I believe

fundamentally in adult education and training as the way to go. In my mind the debate about competition between the unemployment benefit rate and the minimum wage is not relevant in this country."

At the European level, Mr Nyrup Rasmussen talks of a "New Deal" initiative by the EU to increase Europe's commitment to education, research and development and labour flexibility. But, again, he is suspicious of calls for deep, free-market reforms.

There is no connection directly in the different countries between the degree of regulation - be it by law, be it by

collective agreements - and the unemployment rate. So when it comes to making the labour market more flexible, it seems difficult to develop a European strategy which covers the significant differences in the different member countries.

"Spain is perhaps the most well documented single example of structural problems directly related to regulations on the labour market, but if you take the UK you see that the unemployment rate is very high but the regulation degree is very low. So it is not that simple."

The recent rise in popularity of the Liberal opposition party, which calls for just such structural reforms, has sharpened the domestic political debate in Denmark in recent months. Local elections and opinion polls have suggested a polarisation of support around the Social Democrats on the one hand, and the Liberals, led by the energetic Mr Uffe Ellemann Jensen, the former foreign minister, on the other.

If the trend hardened, it could lead to the marginalisation of the handful of small parties that have traditionally held the balance of power in Denmark - and could deprive the Social Democrats of vital coalition support. Mr Nyrup Rasmussen is therefore keen to stress the merits of Denmark's consensus tradition.

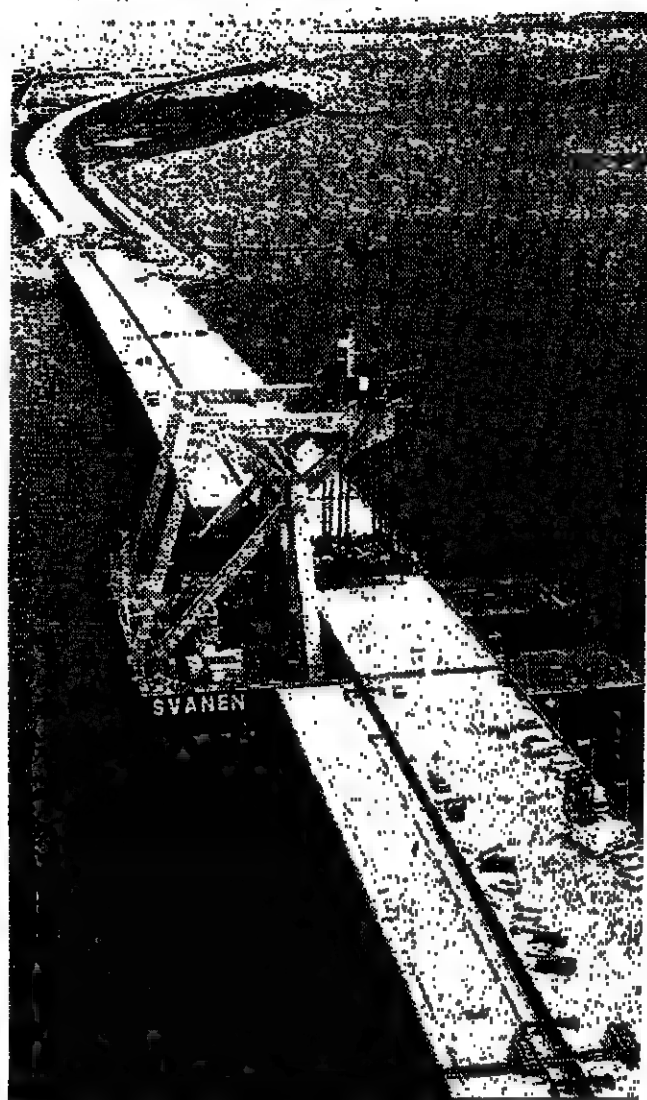
"This trend is not preferable because the tradition here is to have a plurality of political parties. So I would regard it as a serious loss in political life if this trend became stronger. We have always based ourselves upon talking together and listening together. This country was the first country of all - in September 1899 - to create a consensus on the labour market, with the first independent labour court, with the first place where you establish collective agreements. This country still has the lowest potential conflict degree in the labour market. It is an inbuilt factor in the explanation of our welfare society."

Hugh Carnegie describes the scope of Europe's biggest bridge building programme

Roads over northern waters



The proposed Øresund bridge that will help to link Denmark and Sweden - a computer graphic seen from the Swedish coast south of Lomma



Completing the Storebælt West Bridge on May 28, 1993

Although Denmark is a small country, its scattered landscape of islands and the Jutland peninsula has always meant that any non-air journey between the main centres required at least one ferry crossing. By the end of the decade, however, that will have changed.

Within the next four years a DKR20bn project to build a bridge and tunnel between the islands of Zealand and Funen is set to be completed, providing for the first time a direct road and rail link between the capital, Copenhagen, and the country's other main centres such as Odense, Esbjerg, Århus and Aalborg.

When construction began in 1988 of the link across the 18km-wide Storebælt, or Great Belt, channel, the then minister of transport, Mr H. P. Clausen, summed up its significance: "We will have a completely new Denmark with the fixed link across Storebælt. We shall no longer speak of east and west Denmark, but of Denmark as a whole. This project will be more significant to the population of Denmark and the business sector than any other traffic project has ever been."

But Storebælt is only the first step in a series of huge bridge/tunnel projects planned by Denmark to transform its transport links both internally and to its neighbours.

If outstanding political obstacles are overcome, construction will begin next year on the Øresund bridge linking Copenhagen to the Swedish city of

Malmö. Discussions have also begun with Germany and Sweden on building a fixed link from the south eastern Danish island of Lolland, across the Fehmarn straits, to Germany.

Once in place, the Øresund bridge will, in concert with Storebælt, give Sweden a direct land link for the first time, not just to Denmark, but to Germany and the rest of continental Europe. This link would be made even quicker and more direct by a Fehmarn bridge. Denmark expects a significant boost to its economy from its own improved links and from increased through-trade from Sweden to Europe.

Storebælt has slipped about one year behind schedule chiefly because of problems encountered while tunnelling. But the rail link, which will run for most of the crossing in the tunnel, is due to open by 1998. The road link is scheduled to open a year later, running across a two-stage bridge including the world's longest single suspension bridge span of 1,624 metres.

The DKR20bn cost has been raised by the state-owned Storebælt company through international markets, backed by state guarantees. It will be paid for by a commitment from the state railways to pay DKR835m a year for 30 years to use the link and from vehicle tolls.

Much greater controversy and uncertainty surrounds the Øresund link. Although the Danish and Swedish governments signed a treaty to build it in 1991, minority parties in the two governments currently in office have raised objections,

delaying a final go-ahead for the project.

The joint Swedish-Danish consortium set up to build the combined 16.8km road/rail tunnel and bridge link is due to invite construction tenders early next year. But, on the Swedish side, the Centre party, which holds the environment portfolio in the government, is continuing to object chiefly on environmental grounds, despite support for the project from the coalition leaders, the Moderate party, and the main opposition Social Democrats.

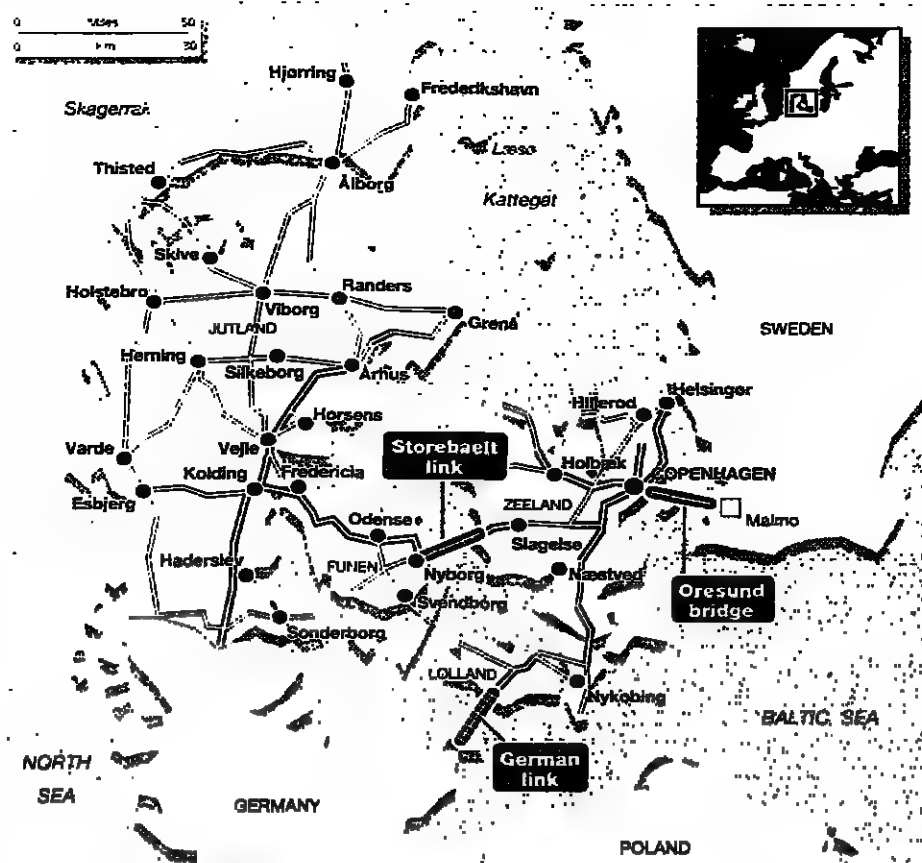
In Denmark, the Radical Liberal party is objecting on the grounds that the cost of the project is unlikely to be met by the planned method of repayment. The budgeted cost of the link is DKR17bn, including DKR12bn for the tunnel and bridge, DKR3bn in land costs on the Danish side and DKR2bn on the Swedish side.

The consortium concedes that these costs are likely to rise by up to DKR700m as a result of construction strictures demanded by Sweden's Water Rights Court this month to ensure the environmental impact of the bridge is minimised, particularly on the sensitive subject of impeding vital salt water flows into the already badly polluted Baltic.

The pay back on the costs is scheduled to come from DKR300m a year shared by the Danish and Swedish state railways and the rest to be raised in vehicle tolls. But the project's backers have run into something of a Catch-22. Their financial plans rely on a rather modest estimate of 10,000 vehicle crossings per day.

More vehicle crossings would raise the toll income, but the two governments are under pressure not to break international undertakings on exhaust emissions by allowing excessive traffic on the bridge.

Mr Henning Hummelsoe, the chief executive of the Øresund company, nevertheless believes the project will go ahead. "I think we have reached the point of no return. I don't think that the environmental questions or the financial questions can stop the project. So much political prestige has been invested that it must go through."



East Tunnel under the Storebælt: the completed link will 'create a new Denmark'

Economic optimism is very tentative, writes Hilary Barnes

Fog in the middle distance

shall not see the same kind of international boom we used to see," he said.

However, Denmark, says the government, has a better starting point for sustained, non-inflationary growth than most other European countries. It has a surplus on trade in goods and services which is almost seven per cent of GDP (not even Japan can beat that) and a surplus on the current balance of payments account

of just over three per cent of GDP.

Inflation is the lowest in Europe at just 1.2 per cent over the 12 months to September. Hourly wage rates have increased by only about two per cent this year, and after the trauma of speculative attacks on the krone in the spring and again in July this year, which forced the Central Bank to raise interest rates sharply, interest rates are rap-

idly coming down to average European levels again.

Government finances are in deficit, showing the effects of the long recession and high unemployment, but the general government financial deficit this year will be about 4.4 per cent of GDP, which is below the average for the EU. The strong external position is being exploited by the government to give a substantial boost to domestic demand via

fiscal policy in 1994, when Mr Mogens Lykketoft, the finance minister, estimates that the stimulus to GDP growth from fiscal policy will be about 1.3 per cent.

The fiscal boost will come more particularly from a reform of the tax system, passed by the Folketing last summer. This reduces the country's exceptionally high marginal income tax rates (the top rate will go down from 68

to about 62 per cent and the bottom rate from 51 to 43 per cent). The revenue lost on income tax will not be clawed back in 1994, although higher energy and other "green" taxes will equalise the revenue loss by 1996, when the reform will be fully implemented.

The government expects the boost to demand to lead to a surge in real private consumption by almost 4 per cent and a 2.9 per cent increase in GDP next year. Other forecasters are more cautious, but agree that demand will rise significantly. The Industries Federation, for example, predicts GDP growth of 2.5 per cent and increase in private consumption of 3.0 per cent.

The upswing will generate a few extra jobs, but neither the government nor other forecasters expect unemployment to fall by more than about 20,000 to around 330,000 from 380,000, or 12.5 per cent (seasonally adjusted), this autumn.

Mr Lykketoft's medium-term report emphasises that after 1994 fiscal policy must switch to containing the government deficit in order to ensure a sustained low real rate of interest, a necessary condition of obtaining strong growth in the business sector.

In the same report, Mr Lykketoft's ministry asserts that marginal changes in minimum wage levels and the country's high unemployment benefits (benefit is 90 per cent of wages up to a ceiling which is 90 per

cent of the average wage for skilled workers) will not have a significant effect on demand for labour, and drastic changes "are not acceptable in a society of the Danish kind," as Mr Lykketoft told the FT.

For Mr Skov Christensen, however, what is at stake is not the social welfare system. "This has to do with survival," he said. Without action on minimum wages, the steady increase in transfer incomes (between 24 and 25 per cent of

Drastic changes to the benefits system would not be popular in a welfare state like Denmark

the population aged 16-66 live off transfer incomes now) will both undermine government finances and export-competitiveness.

The Danish Employer's Association, the sister organisation to the Federation of Industries, put some figures on what it regards as necessary if more jobs are to be generated for the less skilled population groups. The generous transfer incomes - such as unemployment benefits - which currently place a floor on the hourly wage rate of DKR67, must be reduced to that the minimum wage can fall to DKR50, it said. At that level, the Danish minimum wage would be just eight times the average wage in Poland.

A.P. Moller, the discreetly-run, strangely-structured shipping group that is Denmark's biggest business concern, has this year undergone a change in chief executive for only the second time in its near 90 year history.

On the eve of his 80th birthday in July, Mr Mærsk Mc-Kinney Moller stepped aside from the day-to-day running of the group founded in 1904 and headed until the 1960s by his father, the late Mr A.P. Moller. Into his shoes stepped Mr Jess Soderberg, 49, who assumed the task of leading an enterprise with total annual turnover of some DKR50bn across a range of businesses spanning shipping, shipbuilding, oil and gas, air transport and retailing.

But although the chief executive is no longer a member of the controlling family, few people inside or outside the Moller empire expect dramatic shifts to follow the change at the top. "Although the skipper has changed, there has been no change in the crew and we remain on the same heading," said a Moller executive unable to resist a seafaring metaphor. Indeed, Mr Mc-Kinney Moller has not left the scene. He remains chairman of the

Profile: A. P. MOLLER, Denmark's top company, has a new boss

A rare change of command

group's twin parent companies D/S Svendborg and D/S 1812 (both controlled by the Moller family) and the boards of key companies within the group. "I will stay informed... I will often be in this building, although in another office," he told staff at Moller's Copenhagen headquarters when he handed over to Mr Soderberg.

Analysts in Copenhagen seem reassured by Mr Mc-Kinney Moller's move, anticipating a smooth transition under Mr Soderberg, formerly chief financial officer. Furthermore, a reputation for being well managed has helped deflect investor concern over the complex and arcane structure of the Moller group, and its reluctance to speak publicly about its business.

Although the parent companies, with a market value of some DKR40bn, together make up about one quarter of the market capitalisation of the Copenhagen stock exchange, the A.P. Moller group, with



Mærsk Mc-Kinney Moller: founder's son bows out at 80



Jess Soderberg, 49, only the third chief executive in nearly 90 years

30,000 employees, does not publish consolidated accounts. This is because of its structure under which A.P. Moller itself is an unlisted partnership.

The parent companies have kept to a minimum the information they must publish by avoiding share issues which would require a detailed prospectus. In the 89-year history of the group, the only issue by

the parent companies was a bonus issue in 1973. But there is no arguing with the share performance. They have surged by some 50 per cent this year, with D/S Svendborg B shares fetching a cool DKR170,000 each. The market's judgment is clearly that A.P. Moller's businesses are, in the words of an analyst, "in good health".

This is despite a nasty slide in profits in 1992 in the shipping business. The dominant Tankers and Liners in Partnership unit saw net profits tumble to DKR1.05bn from DKR1.5bn, on slightly reduced turnover of DKR19.5bn - and the figures were worse after transfers from the parent companies were excluded.

Analysts put most of this down to weakness in the worldwide shipping market. They believe Moller's evolution over the past 15 years into the world's leading container carrier will pay off when the cycle turns up again.

Moller has continued to invest heavily throughout the recession, this year ordering five ships from its own Odense Steel Shipyard capable of carrying 4,800 standard 20-ft containers. It has established a number of "hub" container terminals around the world allowing it to develop an integrated north-south and east-west route network with extensive

onshore services, including container trains in the US and Europe.

Moller has also recently returned to building and operating VLCC (very large crude carrier) oil tankers. It has ordered six 300,000-tonne double-hulled tankers, three of which have already been built, from Odense. These were the first of their type to be built in the world as Moller seeks to cash in on new marine regulations on "environmentally friendly" tankers that are designed to be resistant to puncture.

However, the element in A.P. Moller which increasingly underpins group profitability is the oil and gas division, which last year produced profits of DKR808m on turnover of DKR3.3bn. The group has a 39 per cent share in Danish Underground Consortium, the sole operator of Denmark's North Sea oil and gas. This year DUC signed a contract with the state to double gas deliveries to 7bn cubic metres a year from 1997. "Forty per cent of Moller profits will come from oil and gas in the long term," said a Copenhagen analyst. "That is the cash cow."

Hugh Carnegie

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DENMARK III

■ Profile: PETER ZOBEL, a power in the insurance industry

Architect of a new structure

The Danish insurance industry is undergoing a process of recovery after the shocks of 1992, when the country's second largest insurance group, Hafnia, collapsed and the largest group, Baltica, came close to suffering the same fate.

The man who has emerged as the architect of the restructuring of the industry is Mr Peter Zobel, chief executive of Codan, a company founded by Mr Zobel's family but in which the UK's Sun Alliance is now the dominant shareholder.

Undaunted by the fact that Hafnia was twice the size of Codan, Mr Zobel made a successful bid for Hafnia in March this year, turning Codan into

In the face of widespread doubts among insurers, he urged higher premiums - and up they went

the country's largest accident insurance group (Baltica remains larger in life assurance).

A few months later he put his stamp on the industry once more by announcing that premiums throughout the industry were far too low. Codan, he said, would be putting them up by an average of 15 per cent in 1994.

The other large companies, several of which had recently promised the public that they were not even dreaming about premium increases, all agreed within days that Mr Zobel was right.

They are following Codan's example. For many years Codan has enjoyed the best profitability in the Danish insurance industry, but it was first fol-

lowing the mess which Baltica and Hafnia made of their businesses that Mr Zobel was able to stamp his mark on the industry.

Baltica and Hafnia were both brought to their knees by a series of investments which turned out to be unwise and crippling expensive. In Hafnia's case, strategic share investments in Baltica itself and Sweden's big insurer, Skandia, caused the problems. When the price of the shares in these two companies collapsed in 1992, Hafnia Holding, the group's parent company, was bankrupted.

Property investments were the straws which broke Baltica's back, but while Hafnia Holding was bankrupted and the insurance operations taken over by Codan, Baltica was successfully reconstructed. Its insurance business, which as such has never been in trouble, has continued as before under a new management headed by Mr Hans Rindvad Hansen, formerly co-chief executive at Den Danske Bank.

Codan's excellent profits record was based on the principle that profits are more important than market shares; it left others to grow poorer by fulfilling their ambitions to become the biggest. Codan led a comfortable existence and its shareholders were well rewarded.

"We didn't have to do it," said Mr Zobel, reflecting on the acquisition of Hafnia, "but when you have the money available you have to take the chance. After all, if you don't use the money you have, you might as well shut up shop."

Having bought Hafnia, Codan was not forced to undertake the merger of the two

companies, but there were good reasons for undertaking the merger, according to Mr Zobel.

There are cost reductions to be made (a staff reduction of about 10 per cent is under way) and the companies have similar customer profiles and strategies, even if there was a profitability gap.

The starting point for the two companies was this: in total premium income (life and accident) Codan's was DKr2.1bn to Hafnia's DKr5.1bn; Codan had 1,069 staff to Hafnia's 2,452; but Codan's equity capital was DKr4.3bn to Hafnia's DKr66m.

Together, the assets of the group are about DKr50bn and its market share is 15 per cent in accident business, 21 per cent in industrial insurance (70 per cent in marine and energy), and 12 per cent in life assurance and pension savings.

Mr Zobel's aim is to make the two companies into a single business, both inwardly and outwardly, within one year, which means by the summer of 1994 creating a firm in which profitability and financial soundness have priority.

Mr Zobel took over a company twice his own

firm's size and now heads Denmark's largest accident insurance group

Mr Zobel, 57, does not waste words. He speaks in short, crisp sentences, a manner which does nothing to belie his reputation as a tough cookie, who does not suffer fools, let alone incompetent managers, gladly. The deliberation and speed



Peter Zobel: profits are more important than market share

with which he is carrying through the merger only reinforce this reputation.

All the main management and personnel were in their new positions in the organisation within four months of the acquisition. In the final months of 1993 the superfluous members of the staff were being identified, conversion of the computer systems was under way, the staff associations (trade unions) were being reorganised to fit the new corporate structure.

In the first half of 1994 new products will be introduced, the conversion of the data processing systems is due for completion and increases in premiums will be implemented.

The reorganisation may not have been simple, but says Mr Zobel, it is nothing compared with the difficulty of eliminating the cultural differences and the them-and-us syndrome - "a hall of a problem," he says bluntly.

Codan is known for a strong team spirit, an image built up

over many years, and, says Mr Zobel, not a man to hide his light under a bushel. "It is to some extent me".

One of the problems which has emerged is that Codan's managers, who have been put into most of the senior positions, have suddenly found themselves running a department which is three times as large as the one they were used to running. "They have been used to having a finger on everything the department did, and they have yet to realise you can't run a bigger department in the same way," said an anonymous manager from the Hafnia side of the firm.

In the end the success of the acquisition and merger will have to be judged by long-term results. This year has been a reasonably satisfactory year for the insurance companies, which, with bond and share prices rising strongly, made excellent returns on their financial investments, but the substantial "insurance-technical" losses of recent years have persisted.

Mr Zobel is hoping to turn the corner in 1994, when premiums will go up. Some loss of market shares as Codan's profitability is re-established will not disturb him. By 1995, he hopes that the group's results will be satisfactory.

The market seems to share Mr Zobel's optimism. Codan's share price was maintained, indeed increased slightly, following the acquisition of the loss-making and impoverished Hafnia and the Codan share remains the most expensive of the insurance shares listed on the Copenhagen Stock Exchange.

Hilary Barnes

Hilary Barnes: how the banks weathered the storm

Seven lean years

The Danish banks have come through a seven-year recession with their financial integrity intact and, in contrast to the situation in the other Nordic countries, the state has not had to provide either capital or guarantees to keep the banking sector afloat.

The reason, said Mr Knud Sørensen, chief executive of the country's largest bank, Den Danske Bank, who is also chairman of the Danish Bankers' Association, is sound legislation and a very thorough bank inspectorate. "Compared with what happened in Norway, Sweden and Finland, Danish banks have fared very well indeed," he said.

But in a country which still has about 150 banks and savings banks (many of them tiny) to serve 5.1m people, dozens of banks have closed over the past 10 years. In most cases the process has been fairly painless. Other banks have taken over banks whose capital adequacy has fallen below the legal minimum (nine per cent currently, falling to eight per cent in 1995).

Depositors (covered by an insurance scheme for deposits of up to DKr250,000) have not lost their money, although in several cases shareholders have. "The banking community takes pride in finding solutions which do not involve direct state aid," said Mr Sørensen. But resistance by healthy banks to saving their weaker brethren is growing.

"After a number of years when we have had to set aside considerable sums to cover losses, willingness and capability to assist is rather limited," said Mr Sørensen. "We have reached a stage where it is hard to justify to your own shareholders, staff and customers that you have to support banks which have taken too many risks. We will do a lot out of responsibility to society, but there is a limit."

When this limit has been definitively reached is something which only time can tell, and the matter may not be put to serious test in the immediate future as this year has favoured the banks, which suffered a combined loss of DKr10.9bn in 1993. Rising bond and share prices have boosted investment income, and cost cutting and lower interest rates have contributed to better operating margins.

All the big banks, Danske, Fælleskassen and Jyske Bank, were back in the black in the first half. "The present situation in Danish banking is not that bad. We look forward with some optimism to 1994 and 1995 should be a fairly good year," said Mr Sørensen.

The difficulty of rescuing troubled banks was highlighted this autumn by the case of Himmerlandsbanken, a small bank serving the North Jutland town of Hobro, where it had a market share of around 40 per cent. The bank

collapsed. Shareholders and bondholders lost their money, but the bank was enabled to keep going when it was taken over by Sparekassen Nordjylland (Spar Nord), the North Jutland savings bank, after some hard persuasion by the government.

Spar Nord believes it received a promise from the government that in return for preventing the closure of Himmerlands, Spar Nord could make a tax loss deduction of DKr178m. But when muck-raking politicians began questioning the legality of the deduction, the government denied having made the promise.

The case came close to costing the minister for revenue, Mr Ole Stenetz, a Social Democrat, his job, and it may yet do so. A judicial inquiry has been set up to look into the misunderstanding and Mr Stenetz's political life is on the line. Himmerlands has been accused of trying to save itself by selling bonds to the bank with money lent to its customers for the purpose, and without the risks being properly explained to investors.

As a consequence, the government has tabled legislation which will make it illegal for a bank, from the moment that a

bond issue is announced, to offer to finance investment in the bonds. With many banks needing to replace bond-financed subordinated (tier 2) capital with new loans in order to meet the requirements of BIS capital adequacy rules, the events at Himmerlandsbanken and the political reaction to it have come at a head moment for the banks.

"Right now is not the best climate in which to raise capital," said Mr Sørensen. "But things will calm down again. One should not draw the conclusion from Himmerlandsbanken that other banks will not be able to refinance."

Meanwhile, attempts are being made to find a solution to a problem at Varde Bank, which serves the west coast part of Esbjerg, the country's 16th largest bank with assets of about DKr11bn. Despite a capital restructuring in 1992, when the Central Bank and a consortium of larger banks guaranteed the bank's capital adequacy ratio has slipped below the legal minimum again and action to save the bank is imminent.

"I can only say that we shall try to adopt the most sensible solution," said Mr Sørensen.

KEY FACTS

Area	43,075 sq km
Population	5.17 million (1992 estimate)
Head of state	Queen Margrethe II
Prime minister	Poul Nyrup Rasmussen
Currency	Krone (DKr)
Average exchange rate	1992 \$1=DKr6.036 25/11/93 \$1=DKr6.761

	1992	Latest
Total GDP (\$bn)	142.4	n.a.
Real GDP growth (%)	1.7	0.5
GDP per capita (\$)	27,562	n.a.
Components of GDP (%)		
Private consumption	52.0	
Government consumption	15.2	
Exports	25.2	n.a.
Imports	37.0	
Trade balance (\$bn)	-25.4	
Consumer prices (% change)	-2.1	1.2
Unemployment (% of lab force)	11.3	12.1
Reserves minus gold (\$bn)	11.0	10.0
3 month money rate (%)	11.4	8.1
10 year bond yield (%)	9.0	6.6
FT-A index (% change on year)	-25.0	+33.6
Current account balance (\$bn)	4.7	4.2
Exports (\$bn)	40.6	n.a.
Imports (\$bn)	39.4	n.a.
Trade balance (\$bn)	7.2	n.a.
Main trading partners (1992, %)	Exports	Imports
Germany	23.6	23.1
Sweden	10.6	10.8
UK	10.1	8.2
EC	62.4	53.4
EFTA	21.6	22.4

NOTES: * = 1993 figures (GDP growth, current account - EU forecasts for year; consumer prices, unemployment, reserves - September; interest rates - 25/11/93; FT-A index - % change from 1/1/93 to 25/11/93).

SOURCE: IMF, Datastream, Economist Intelligence Unit

Exports stumble after five years of growth

Currency crossfire

This has been a dismal, and atypical, year for Danish exporters. Since a squeeze was put on domestic demand in 1986, exports have shown exemplary growth, increasing by 6-8 per cent a year until this year, when they have fallen by about seven per cent in value and 4-5 per cent in volume terms.

The Danes were suddenly rendered uncompetitive in some of their main markets by devaluations last year by European countries accounting in all for about 36 per cent of the country's merchandise exports. At the same time, the German market, which accounts for about 24 per cent of Denmark's merchandise exports, went into recession.

The Swedish krona has depreciated by 26 per cent against the Danish krone over the past year. Sweden accounted in 1992 for 10.6 per cent of Denmark's merchandise exports. In the first half of this year exports to Sweden fell by 16 per cent.

Exports to the UK, accounting for about nine per cent of 1992 exports, were down by 18 per cent, although sterling has recovered most of its value against the krone since the autumn of 1992.

The trade-weighted value of the krone this winter is back to the level of summer 1992, before the European Monetary System was rocked by currency speculation, but the statistical average is small consolation for those who export to Sweden or compete with her in other markets.

However, voices calling for devaluation have been few and far between and they received no support from the leading business organisations or from either the government or the

opposition. Denmark spent a decade after 1982, when a Conservative-led government took office after a long period of Social Democratic domination, proving that it is committed to low inflation and a stable currency.

When the European Monetary System to all intents and purposes collapsed in August this year, the government sought to avoid a significant depreciation of the krone. The Central Bank maintained the

average value of the krone unchanged against the Ecu, and after an initial weakening against the D-mark, with the exchange rate going from DKr3.88 to 4.14, the krone has strengthened again recently to a rate of around DKr3.94.

Danish exports are geographically concentrated on neighbouring markets, with some 75 per cent going to EC and Efta countries. In products terms, manufactures are about 75 per cent of merchandise exports and agricultural exports for about 18 per cent. But the food industry is more important than figures suggest.

With fish, processed fish products, sugar and machinery, equipment and other inputs for the food industry (and not forgetting farmed mink pelts, where Denmark is a world leader), the total food and agricultural sector accounts for well over a quarter of the country's exports.

The EU's agricultural policy reforms and the Gatt reforms (not yet agreed, of course) will hit agriculture hard, cutting

the value of agricultural production by about 10 per cent, according to Danish government calculations.

Dairy exports will be hit especially badly, but pigmeat is one of the products which will suffer least from the reforms, which is a Danish advantage. Pigmeat accounts for about eight per cent of total exports and 45 per cent of agricultural exports.

Despite the troubled future for agriculture in the medium term, there is no inclination on the part of the government or the agro-industrial sector itself to write off the agricultural and food industries. On the contrary, a report this autumn by the Ministry for Business Policy Coordination identified the food and food technology industries as one of the segments in which Denmark has a strong competitive advantage with an accumulated know-how.

A report to the government by the Institute for Food Studies and Agro-industrial Development in 1992 claimed that the value of agro-industrial production could be doubled over the next 20 years.

While the government does not necessarily accept the report's conclusions, it has shown its commitment to the agro-industrial industries through the Food Industry Technology research programme. Government and industry on a 50-50 basis together put about DKr900m into the programme over the period 1990-94 and plan to invest DKr10m over the next five years in stage two of the programme, which is by far the largest Danish government-funded programme of its type.

Hilary Barnes

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Exp 11/20/93

Colin Amery reviews three further finalists for the FT's architecture prize to be awarded today

A field of the highest quality

We are almost there. Tomorrow's FT will publish the name of this year's winner of the Financial Times Architecture Award. He or she will receive Britain's most independent and highly regarded architectural prize at a luncheon in London today. The long period of judging and visiting is over and there will be an opportunity in tomorrow's paper for an assessment of the significance of the award and of the state of architecture in Britain today.

Previous articles have looked at five of the eight shortlisted schemes: Standed Airport and Cranfield Library by Sir Norman Foster and Partners; and Bracken House, Schlumberger Research and Bedford Lakes (IBM) Business Park by Michael Hopkins and Partners. The remaining three schemes on the shortlist represent three very different types of building. The Queen's Stand at Epsom Racecourse by Richard Horden Associates; the new car park in Chichester by Birds Porchmouth and Russell; and Winchester City offices designed by the Hampshire County Architects department.

Epsom clearly needed an elegant new stand that could comfortably house the crowds on Derby day as well as provide a centre for functions and entertainments throughout the year. The choice of Richard Horden and Associates as architects



Modern and vernacular: a wall of glass brings natural light into Winchester's new city offices

was a brave one. The practice is known for its structural and engineering expertise and its experimental approach to building technology. The client, United Racecourses, has, by choosing a radical approach, acquired a new stand that is the same of contemporary design.

The problem of new buildings in England's cathedral cities has been tackled in two very distinctive and different ways in Winchester and Chichester. Both cities have mixed reputations when it comes to new architecture, but it is fair to say that both places take great care about any additions to their ancient fabric.

Winchester has a county architects department that is one of the most distinguished in the country. Under the direction of Colin Stansfield-Smith, Hampshire has acquired a high reputation, particularly for its new schools and other educational buildings. The site of the new

offices, which are partly occupied by the architects' department, is a typical, tight Winchester site, but one that had been spoiled in earlier days by the erection of a large multi-storey car park. The new offices try to be both modern and vernacular, adopting a traditional pitched roofline but lighting the offices through a completely glazed wall. This gives it the appearance of working in an atrium, except that it has a remarkable view over the city. An agreeable

courtyard garden designed around an existing tree is another feature of the scheme, adding to its overall picturesque qualities. The pavement passed close to one side of the new block and this facade has been enlivened by the presence of specially commissioned stained glass windows. Chichester had a problem. The city is keen on traffic management and car parking is a crucial element of any traffic scheme. The decision to build a large, new multi-storey car park on the edge of the city centre but outside the old city walls was a controversial one. Chichester decided to commission a relatively unknown young practice, Birds Porchmouth and Russell, and the resulting building is extraordinary in many ways.

The architects decided not to diminish the scale of the whole operation but to make the car park look like a new set of city defences. The length of the building is broken up by the fat, circular staircase towers which are built of perforated brick work. Once you have parked your car the journey from the car park into the city centre takes you on a series of high level pedestrian bridges from which you can view the ancient town.

Even in these recessionary years the quality of the best of British architecture is very high. Choosing a winner for the FT award will not be easy.

Concert/Richard Fairman

Bartoli triumphs again

Almost all the first half of her Wigmore Hall recital on Friday, accompanied by György Fischer, was devoted to "arie antiche". There is a secret to singing these miniatures. They are to be treated as the Italian equivalent of art songs, then every subtle inflection and change of colour must sound as if it was only thought about the moment before. Bartoli, with youth on her side (she is still in her 20s), makes them as fresh as if the ink was still wet on the page.

The expressive colours in this mezzo voice are ravishing. Most of the time we hear it in comedy, but an aria from Vivaldi's *Bajazet* showed it can be turned no less winningly to pathos. At the end, somebody near the front called for this item to be repeated as an encore and it was just as moving the second time round.

Some delightful songs by Mozart and Bellini in the second half were sung with the same degree of imagination, though by this point one might have been feeling the need for something stronger.

That was supplied with the aria *Qui la Voce* from Bellini's *I puritani* - usually for soprano, but performed here as adapted by the composer for the mezzo Maria Malibran. To bel canto, as to everything else, Bartoli brings her own personality, singing off the words in the aria, shaping the cabaletta for limpid beauty, when she of all singers might have chosen to dazzle us with her speed and agility. A move by Cecilia Bartoli into the operas of Bellini and Donizetti would be a fascinating prospect.

Theatre in Edinburgh/Alastair Macaulay

Master Builder avoids the Scottish tendency

Brian Cox - the National Theatre's most recent Lear and the RSC's award-winning *Titus Andronicus* has returned to Edinburgh's Royal Lyceum as leading actor and co-director of Ibsen's *The Master Builder*.

Cox, who started his career at the Lyceum, is not one of those Scots who disregards refined playing in favour of a Scottish slant, sometimes called "Glaswegian vulgarity". His *Master Builder*, played with Scottish accents but set in Norway, is a splendid example to Edinburgh theatre of how to avoid the excesses of this "Scottish tendency".

In a Lyceum programme interview, Cox speaks of his training at Lamda ("I came from Dundee so Glasgow was as alien a place to me as London was") and says that he "can't stand nationalism". Later this season Bill Paterson, a more overtly Scottish actor also acclaimed for his London stage work, returns to the Lyceum in Bulgakov's *A Mongrel's Heart*. It would be splendid if, in a later season, the Lyceum could bring Cox back in a major Shakespeare role (Anthony and Cleopatra), Timon, Othello or, most obviously, "the Scottish play".

Cox dominates this production as Halvard Solness, the master builder, showing him as a working man who has raised himself by driving ambition and industry; he uses his bullish, neckless, physical power and vocal force to show this master builder as an ageing, domineering dynamo. (Morag Hood plays his wife as an altogether more cultivated and delicate Edinburgh type, smiling nobly through adversity: a beautiful performance.) It is plain that Hilde Wangel (Siri Neal), who arrives to change his life, comes from far away; she is the least Scottish character.

Cox uses ten silent young apprentices to "frame" the production. They function as part of Solness's workforce, as town spectators, and to help move scenery. One in particular stands still, looking out at us, before each act. He, and they, stand for many things: the child that Solness once was, the children Solness and his

wife lost, the youthfulness Solness dreads and is fascinated by. Clever, but actually too intrusive in a play whose symbolism and ambiguities are already prominent.

In this production those meanings and ambiguities are vivid. Ibsen embodies, at the same time, the Romanticism of the early 19th century (Solness forever bursting against the confines of home and marriage), the naturalism and symbolism of the late 19th century (the social realism of the workplace; Solness and Hilde building their idealistic "castles in



Brian Cox and Siri Neal

the air"), and the psychological investigations of the early 20th century. Cox's Hilde Wangel (Siri Neal), who arrives to change his life, comes from far away; she is the least Scottish character.

Cox strikingly combines visceral force with intellectual refinement. However, as in some of his recent London performances, he forces so much volume and impact from certain lines that they break the

cumulative drama. Neal, an altogether less mighty performer, is slightly too arch a Hilde, nor does she have all the character's heartless impulsiveness, but she keeps keenly alive the gist and detail of every scene.

The Lyceum's previous production was Kenny Ireland's staging of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I caught it at the end of its transfer run in Glasgow. Ireland is developing a real repertory company here; it was good to see some of the same actors who had been in his *Recruiting Officer* earlier this autumn. Few of them, however, know how to combine clear verse-speaking with naturalism; and Ireland added an unnecessary layer of trickiness by placing an echo around the fairies' voices. Rae Smith's scenery helped them to achieve some wonderful instant disappearing acts, but everything was an awkward mixture of staginess and superficiality - until the Pyramus and Thisbe scene, which worked like (excuse the pun) a dream.

At the Traverse, Sue Glover's *Bondagers*, a hit of the 1991 season, has been revived. A beautiful play, it movingly does honour to a vanished part of Scottish social history: the female agricultural labourers (bondagers) who, in the last century, moved each year from farm to farm within a small radius. No man appears; the cast consists of six women. (Ian Brown directs.)

The finest parts of the play are the virtually plotless body of its first half, and the ending. The story that wells up between these sections - a tale of sexual abuse, a mentally defective girl, rape, murder or accidental death, and punishment - is certainly affecting but relatively obvious. But the lyricism of the outer scenes is haunting; I love the way that the rhythms and spacings of agricultural work are caught, and the intimacies and tensions of female colloquy. Here Scottish acting, Scottish theatre, Scottish history are all admirably interwoven.

The Master Builder continues at the Lyceum until December 11: 051-229-9697. *Bondagers* runs at the Traverse until December 15: 051-229-1404.

Contemporary Dance/Clement Crisp

Buoyant Bhuller

Ever since he joined London Contemporary Dance Theatre a decade ago, Darshan Singh Bhuller has been identified with dancing that is mercurial, brilliant and varied in dynamics. In Richard Alston's *The Perilous Night*, his solo helps point to the future of London Contemporary Dance, as Alston will become director of the troupe when it mutates next year. The piece shows why there is much to hope for from him. Of the five new works seen on Rosebery Avenue this far in this LDC season - one more to come next week - *The Perilous Night* is the most important.

The piece uses John Cage's exercise for prepared piano of the same name. Alston's response to the nervous drive and gamelan clangours of Cage's score is a study in nocturnal alarms. Bhuller, in pyjama bottoms, vest, dark glasses (not a modish accessory but a symbol of night itself), is impelled through a sequence of dream - and possibly waking - states that con-

vey, with unfailing resource, the physical imprint of unness. His body opens out, turns in on itself, builds long phrases of action that reach their culmination in a pose which seems to reverberate in response to the piano's sounds. The variety and imaginative richness of the dance is very fine, and no less finely exposed by Bhuller, who can shape a span of movement or fragment it through a vivid shifts of timing and accent. The solo is as memorable as Alston's earlier *Soda Lake*. It is excellently lit by Peter Mumford. Cage's score is gradually performed by Nicolas Mjølhus. Let it please be filmed.

Nothing else in this programme can stand close examination. Bhuller's choreography for *Fall Like Rain* is a tease. There are three couples, not radically happy, and a gluttonous jazz score by John Martyn. Bhuller appears, on wires, as Yashpati, King of the sky and of rain in the Hindu pantheon, who can foresee destiny. His interventions, swinging over the stage, swim-

ming through the air to touch the mortals, are visually fascinating: there is a dance-pace to be made from the contrast between aerialism and earthbound movement, but this is not it. For reasons I fail to grasp, monsoon rain falls - real water, in torrents. Everyone gets very wet, and the dance, such as it is, looks bedraggled. Gene Kelly never had that problem.

Christopher Bruce's *Waiting* has to do with the release of Nelson Mandela from prison. The corrugated iron walls of a township serve as drums for the cast, who also roll motor-car tyres over the stage. The ever-admirable Kenneth Thorpe dances magnificently, giving the pieces of the choreography real urgency. Mandela, in the person of the singer Kwame Kwesi-Armah, appears. Never mind the dance; feel the predictabilities.

London Contemporary Dance season continues at Sadler's Wells until Saturday. Programming varies. No performance today.



Gene Kelly was never like this: 'Fall Like Rain' looks bedraggled

Docklands Sinfonietta

Two nights after the BBC Symphony played Szymanowski and Lutoslawski superbly at Maida Vale, both composers reappeared in the Docklands Sinfonietta's programme in the Queen Elizabeth Hall (also live on Radio 3). Szymanowski's *Stones of a Path* (Princess came from the same rapturous-exotic period as his First Violin Concerto, and they, too, keep their soloist up in the stratosphere; he wrote them for his sister, who must have been a remarkably assured high soprano.

So, fortunately, is Eileen Hulse, who warbled and cooed through them on Friday to enchanting effect. They will never be in the repertoire of most sopranos, for it is a rare voice that is both at home on those heights and has enough succulent tone to fill out the lush swoops of the music. It is a little unfair to hear them so soon after the glorious Concerto, for they share its heady atmosphere -

not quite so rich, for here the orchestra part is transcribed from the piano original - without the memorable tunes.

Still, hearing them at all is an unusual pleasure; Miss Hulse made it so, and Sian Edwards conducted with delicacy and insight. I was less sure about Lutoslawski's recent, delightful song-cycle *Chantefleurs et Chantefables*, on children's poems by Robert Desnos. Miss Hulse, who was

replacing an indisposed singer at short notice, sounded well in command of the subtle, funny verses, and the conductor captured the gaiety of Desnos's fauna (grasshopper, tortoise, alligator) wittily - yet the set sounded "careful", without the crisp bite that all Lutoslawski music should have.

One more rehearsal might have got it. Two more were needed for Rousseau's racy *Petite Suite*; there were trumpet problems, and a dearth of irony and elegance. By the end of the concert, however, the Sinfonietta had found its proper form, and delivered Haydn's Symphony no. 60, "Il Distratto", with all due alertness and verve. Haydn's score stemmed from some theatre-music; Edwards and her players warmed to that, and it all gleamed with character.

David Murray

Sponsor: Morgan Stanley, BSIS

INTERNATIONAL ARTS GUIDE

BERLIN

CONCERTS
Schauspielhaus Tonight: Bruno Leonardo Gellner plays Beethoven's First Piano Concerto with Berlin Symphony Orchestra. Sun, next Mon and Tues: Michael Schoenwandt conducts Elgar, Lalo and Mozart, with cello soloist Gustav Ravinius (2090 2156).
Philharmonie Tomorrow: Jörg Faerber conducts Württemberg Chamber Orchestra in trumpet concertos by Handel, Vivaldi and Telemann, with soloist Maurice Andre. Fri, Sat, Sun morning: Claudio Abbado conducts Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in opening programme of this season's Faust series, including Wagner's Faust overture and a Kurtág world premiere, plus Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto with Murray Perahia. Perahia and Abbado give further concerts together on Dec 8, 9, 10, 14, 15 and 16 (2548 8132).

OPERADANCE
Komische Oper Tonight: Harry Kupfer's production of Les Contes

d'Hoffmann. Wed: Flemming Flindt's ballet *The Three Musketeers*. Thurs: Yakov Kreizberg conducts orchestral works by Mozart and Shostakovich, with piano soloist Elisabeth Leonskaja. Sun: Carmen (229 2555).
Deutsche Oper Tomorrow and Fri: *L'italiana in Algeri* with Jennifer Lamore. Wed: *Il trovatore*. Thurs and Sun: *Tosca* with Gelfand Kallina and Richard Margolis. Sat: Peter Schaufuss' production of *Sleeping Beauty*. Dec 19: new production of *Un ballo in maschera* (341 0249).
Staatsoper unter den Linden Wed and Sun: Der Freischütz. Thurs and Sat: Minnie's ballet *Don Quixote*. Fri: Giselle. Dec 10: Cecilia Bartoli song recital. Dec 12: Daniel Barenboim conducts first night of Harry Kupfer's new production of *Die Walküre* (200 4762/2035 4494).

NEW YORK

OPERADANCE
Metropolitan Opera The main event this week is the premiere on Thurs of a new production of Verdi's *I Lombardi*, conducted by James Levine, staged by Mark Lamos and designed by John Conklin, with a cast led by Luciano Pavarotti, Aprile Millo and Samuel Ramey (repeated Dec 8, 11, 14, 17, 21, Jan 7, 12, 15, 20). This week's repertoire also includes *Rusalka*, *La bohème*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Fidelio* (362 8000).
State Theater New York City Opera has a four-week run of Balanchine's version of *The Nutcracker*, starting Wed. Daily except Mon, matinee and evening performances on Sat and Sun. No performances Dec 24 and 25 (870 5570).

Joyce Theater Toronto Dance Theatre is in residence from tomorrow till Sun. Next week: *Elko* and *Korra*. Dec 14-Jan 2: American Indian Dance Theatre (242 0800).

CONCERTS
Avery Fisher Hall Tomorrow: Franz Liszt's *Water-Moon* conducts New York Philharmonic Orchestra in works by Richard Strauss and Franz Schmidt. Thurs, Fri, Sat, next Tues: Kurt Masur conducts Brahms and Mendelssohn. Sun afternoon: Itzhak Perlman (875 5030).
Carnegie Hall Thurs: Oscar Peterson. Sat afternoon: Kent Nagano conducts American Composers Orchestra in works by Golijov, Adams and Hindemith (247 7800).
Alice Tully Hall Fri: André Watts and friends play chamber music by Grieg, Schumann and Schubert. Sun afternoon: Ursula Oppens and Arditi Quartet play Schubert's *Quartet* and Ligeti (875 5050).

JAZZ/CABARET
Blue Note Kool and the Gang are in residence from Tues to Sat this week and next, music at 9pm and 11.30pm (131 West 3rd St, 475 8892).
Village Vanguard Wynton Marsalis Sextet begins a two-week residency tomorrow (178 Seventh St South, 255 4037).
Algonquin Hotel Weillia Whitfield, one of the most assured jazz-cabaret voices to arrive in New York in recent years, is in residence Jan 1 in the Oak Room. At 9pm daily except Sun and Mon (59 West 44th St, 840 8800).
Michael's Pub Eddie Bix and Bing: a musical revue saluting the music

of Eddie Lang, Bix Beiderbecke and Bing Crosby, daily from Tues till Sat at 9pm and 11pm. Woody Allen's *Doland* jazz band holds forth most Mondays at 8.45pm (211 East 55th St, 758 2272).
Carlyle Hotel Bobby Short is in Carlyle for the Christmas season. Singer-pianist Barbara Carroll is in Bernheim's Bar (Madison Ave and 70th St, 744 1800).
Rainbow Room A Leonard Bernstein revue is playing till Jan 1 (65th floor, GE Building, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, 632 5000).

THEATRE

● *Angels in America*: Tony Kushner's epic two-part drama - about religion, sex, AIDS and corrupt politics - conjures a vision of America at the edge of disaster. Part one, *Millennium Approaches*, has now been joined by its sequel, *Perestroika* (Walter Kerr, 219 West 48th St, 239 6200).
● *The Kentucky Cycle*: Robert Schenkkan's 1992 Pulitzer Prize-winning drama follows 200 years in the life of a mining family in Appalachia and is performed in two parts (Royale, 242 West 45th St, 239 6200).
● *Cyrano*: a musical based on Edmond Rostand's classic love story. This production, with Dutch actor Bill van Dijk in the title role, originated in Amsterdam (Neil Simon, 250 West 52nd St, 307 4100).
● *She Loves Me*: the 1963 Broadway musical, with a new libretto by Scott Ellis - a delicate, unabashedly simple story with all the humanity, integrity and charm that Broadway's glitz-laden mega-musicals lack (Brooks

Atkinson, 255 West 47th St, 307 4100).
● *Any Given Day*: a drama by Frank Gilroy about a Bronx family who face burning points in the 1940s (Longacre, 220 West 48th St, 239 6200).

● *How to Write a Play*: a loosely autobiographical farce by Charles Ludlum, about a man who must either write a play or lose the grant money given to his theatre (Ridiculous Theatrical Company, One Sheridan Square, at West 4th St and Seventh Ave, 891 2271).

● *Kiss of the Spider Woman*: the Kander and Ebb musical, based on the novel by Manuel Puig about two men in a South American prison. Directed by Harold Prince (Broadhurst, 235 West 44th St, 239 6200).

● *The Sisters Rosensweig*: Wendy Wasserstein's play, a comedy with serious undertones, about the reunion in London of three American Jewish sisters (Ethel Barrymore, 243 West 47th St, 239 6200).

PARIS

DANCE/OPERA
Palais Garnier Ballet de l'Opéra de Paris has revived its 1992 production of *Picasso et la Danse*, featuring choreographies by Nijinska, Roland Petit and Massine. Daily except Monday till December 8 (4742 5371).
Centre Pompidou Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company is in residence this week, daily except tomorrow (4478 1315).
Opéra Bastille Myung-whun Chung conducts Bob Wilson's new production of *Madama Butterfly*

tomorrow, Thurs and Sat, next Mon, Wed and Fri. Diana Soviero and Valentina Sedipova alternate in the title role. Offenbach's *Les brigands* opens on Fri for a run of 19 performances till Jan 12 (4473 1300).
Théâtre des Champs-Élysées A new production of Lully's *Roland* (1685), conducted by René Jacobs and staged by Gilbert Debo, can be seen tomorrow, Thurs, Sat, next Tues and Wed. The title role is sung by José van Dam (4952 5050).

CONCERTS

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées Tonight: Brigitte Engerer piano recital. Wed: Anatol Ugorski piano recital. Fri: Charles Dutoit conducts Orchestre National de France in works by Berlioz and Liszt, with piano soloist Jean-Philippe Collard. Sun morning: Pierre Amoyal and Mikhail Rudy play violin sonatas. Sun and next Mon: Seiji Ozawa conducts Boston Symphony Orchestra and Choir of French Radio in two Berlioz programmes (4952 5050).
Châtelet Tonight: Nikolaus Harnoncourt conducts Chamber Orchestra of Europe in Beethoven's Violin Concerto (Gidon Kremer) and Third Symphony (4028 2840).
Salle Pleyel Dec 8, 9: Lutoslawski conducts Lutoslawski, Dec 15, 16, 17: Sofici conducts Beethoven (4561 0650).

JAZZ/CABARET
American blues singer Linda Hopkins is in residence for the next two weeks at L'Oréal Hampton Jazz Club. Daily except Sun, music from 10.30pm (Hotel Meridien Paris Etoile, 81 Boulevard Gouvion St Cyr, tel 4068 3042).

ARTS GUIDE

Monday: Berlin, New York and Paris.
Tuesday: Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Chicago, Washington.
Wednesday: France, Germany, Scandinavia.
Thursday: Italy, Spain, Athens, London, Prague.
Friday: Exhibitions Guide.

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Samuel Brittan Misguided UK Anti-Brussels fire



It too often seems the Brussels Commission can do no good in British eyes - it is attacked by British ministers both when it is wrong and when it is right. The widely reported strictures made by Kenneth Clarke, the British chancellor, on Community documents at a finance ministers' meeting in Brussels a week ago today, is a case in point.

Ministers had in front of them at least two separate economic documents. One was a "Note on the Economic Elements of the White Paper" that the Community president, Jacques Delors, will be presenting at the forthcoming EC summit, but which will fortunately not be binding. The second was a draft "Framework for the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines" required under the multilateral surveillance clauses of the Maastricht Treaty.

The White Paper draft deserves all the invective of which Mr Clarke is capable, and more. Indeed Jacques Delors himself seemed to a few of those present to be distancing himself from it. Some people have divined behind the thick fog of its prose a call for compulsory shorter hours. That is the least of its faults. The document has all the hallmarks of the Social Affairs Directorate. Its prose is European at its very worst and it is difficult to imagine in what language (if any) it was originally written.

There is no diagnosis of the causes of unemployment and no meaningful policy prescription. An example in paragraph five: "Our intention, backed by the renewed dynamism shown by the European economies from 1985 to 1990, is that Europeans can conceive a model of development in line with their traditions, preserving their social model while adapting it, fully integrating technological progress and the environment, offering to all the prospect of integration in society through work, social activity, participation as a citizen." That is one

of the clearer sentences.

Indeed the authors throw in every worthy development of which they can think such as "the accelerating pace of the information-technology industry, the audio-visual sector and biotechnology" - the modern equivalents of the traditional American invocation of motherhood and apple pie.

The subtext is of course clear. The authors would like to defend all the most unfortunate European institutions (miscalled "social") such as minimum wages, the enforcement of nationwide collective bargaining agreements, heavy overhead employment restrictions. But fearing to do so too explicitly, they try to be all things to all men.

By contrast, the Economic Guidelines - obviously drawn up by the DG2 directorate - were as different from the White Paper as chalk from

Only in the context of wider interest rate cuts can UK fiscal restraint be offset

cheese. The original draft called for a reduction of two to three percentage points in average Community short-term interest rates, with the lead taken by Germany. This would signal to economic agents "that the worst is over, that monetary policy had been loosened as much as it was possible and that nothing would be gained by further postponing any investment decisions which may have been contingent on the availability of the best financing conditions." I would have preferred some justification for these figures - which could easily have been given in the context of an objective for a non-inflationary growth path for nominal GDP. But they are somewhere in the right ball park.

Unfortunately Germany, the Netherlands and the UK managed to get this suggestion removed from the final draft. In doing so the British chancellor

has scored an own goal. For it is only in the context of European or worldwide interest rate reductions that the restrictive effect of British fiscal tightening can be offset without taking the irresponsible risks with sterling that a British dash for ultra cheap money would entail.

On the labour market front, the original guidelines called for an average increase in real wages of one percentage point per annum less than the rise in productivity. This is as near DG2 could go in embracing the notion of pricing people into work. An implication of the guideline would be a trend rise in the share of profits in the national income.

The suggestion was however too much for the ministers who downgraded the suggestion to the historical statement that such moderation in real wage gains had occurred in 1982-89. The one area where the ministers firmed up the guidelines was the insertion of an explicit inflation target of two to three per cent per annum by 1995, a significant victory in the last war.

The headline controversies were about the Commission's original target of at least 15m new jobs, to halve unemployment by the year 2000. Obviously this is an aspiration: the red meat is in the policy proposals (and of course in purely market-generated changes). Still, in the words of the poet Robert Browning, "a man's reach should exceed his grasp." But even the aspiration was too much for ministers who watered it down to a numerical illustration.

The whole episode raises the wider question of the minimalist British attitude to the European Monetary Institute which starts work this coming January in Frankfurt. The work of this Institute offers the best hope of a concerted European monetary policy designed to support non-inflationary growth; and its efforts in the not-so-distant future could be far more important for the outlook for production and jobs than the parochial detail of the UK Budget. But has anyone so briefed Mr Clarke?

The tanks of shiny new tractors unveiled at the Royal Smithfield agricultural show in London today would cause more than a glint of envy in Mr Peter Swift's eye.

Mr Swift, a Lancashire vegetable and cereal farmer, has watched neighbouring producers on large arable farms enjoying a bonanza year; many of them have seen their incomes rise faster than the average for all farmers last year. But Mr Swift faced the prospect of losing his 92-acre holding this summer when mounting debts meant he was unable to hire help for the swede harvest. In the end, two friends helped him at weekends.

"I'm not ashamed to say I've been living on charity for six months," he says. Far from investing in new machinery, he does not own a tractor and is rushing to harvest his crops to curb hire costs. He has only stayed in business because of a sympathetic bank manager, he says.

In contrast, Mr Adrian Peck, who farms 1,000 acres in Cambridgeshire - the grain belt of Britain where farms are large and the farmers the richest in the UK - has just bought a new tractor. He has been able to take advantage of a boost to his income caused by the 20 per cent devaluation last year of the "green pound" which is used to translate prices set by the European Union into sterling. In total, British farmers are an estimated £135m better off this year thanks to the devaluation. Mr Swift receives little support from Brussels because most of his crops are not covered by the European Common Agricultural Policy. He is left to the vagaries of the free market.

Such mixed fortunes highlight the shift that is taking place in agriculture in the UK, away from traditional small, family holdings. Competition is intensifying as world prices for many commodities fall - and European Union-supported prices in particular.

But while the larger farmers may be enjoying a breathing space, the pressures on farmers are set to increase. Additional reforms of CAP are likely to cut subsidies even further and a possible new General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade would step up competition.

Together European agricultural ministers have agreed that EU farmers should be exposed increasingly to the free market and the impact of the Brussels farm support

Furrowed brows look to lean years

Deborah Hargreaves and Alison Maitland on the shift in UK agriculture away from family holdings



Hard times down on the farm: Peter Swift faced the loss of his 92-acre holding this summer

price regime gradually diminished.

So far, however, the effects have been softened in the UK by the devaluation of the green pound, which has increased cereal prices and boosted payments under the controversial set-aside scheme which pays grain farmers to grow less. Mr Peck hopes to receive a cheque soon from the government for close to £13,500 for leaving 150 acres of his land lying fallow this year.

Some of the farmers receiving compensation payment are rich landowners - a fact that particularly galls Mr Swift. Unlike almost any other form of state income support, agricultural aid is not means tested.

UK farmers have been helped further by low interest rates and the 40 per cent tax allowance on farm equipment that the government announced in the March Budget and which lasted until the end of last month. Sales of tractors - regarded as an important indicator of farmers' fortunes - were up 80 per cent in the 10 months to the end of October after record-low sales last year. But they are still only about half the level of 10

years ago. The National Farmers' Union expects the continuing impact of devaluation will result in growth in average farm incomes this year exceeding last year's 23.6 per cent increase, thanks to the continued impact of sterling's devaluation in the first half. But optimism is patchy. Not all sectors are feeling the effects of devaluation. And particularly pessimistic are smaller farmers who have not been protected so much by the CAP, even though the scheme was originally supposed to help them.

Mr Swift sees little hope for farmers like him. "There is no future for a family farm like ours - we're only just surviving. I'm not really making a living, I'm just paying bills." He, and other small farmers, are increasingly looking to find part-time employment.

Mr John Earl, a pig farmer from Kent, says he is selling his animals at 50p a kilo when it costs him £1 a kilo to rear them. Pork prices are not supported under the CAP. "We are tightening our belts, but we can't go on in that situation for long," he says.

Smaller farmers are facing pressure to diversify into leisure or tourist facilities. "It is

part of a general pattern: the large farms are getting bigger and the family farms are being squeezed to look for alternative income," says Mr David Lloyd-Jones who runs holiday cottages on his mixed livestock farm in Wales.

Among the farm industry as a whole there is a fear that the large operators will not long escape such gloom and that the good times currently being enjoyed will soon turn into lean years.

Last year's CAP reforms were designed to be neutral for the European farmer on an average income; compensation payments would be made for three years to counteract the planned falls in prices. But Mr Sean Rickard, the NFU's chief economist, says Britain's arable farms are larger than the European average and tend to grow more grain per acre. Compensation payments will not offset the price falls. Separately, in the next few years, once the effects of devaluation have worn off, payments for set-aside are likely to fall short of revenues foregone.

Moreover, after the three years covered by the current CAP reforms, many farmers

believe support prices will be reduced again. A Gatt agreement would also have the effect of cutting EU support prices even further, bringing many close to world levels.

Mr Peck fears that he and his large-farmer counterparts will have to reckon with competition from big farmers from, for example, Australia and the US. He points to wheat farms in Australia which are on average twice as big as his and more highly mechanised. "How could we in Britain compete with that? We'd have to dig up the countryside," he argues.

Mr Malcolm McAlister, managing director of Booker Farming, which farms directly or advises on the management of 45,000 acres in England and Scotland, says a Gatt agreement would squeeze less efficient producers and hasten the concentration of farming.

"Farming will move to areas of natural advantage - our best farms in East Anglia are world-competitive cereal producers. But if you're a struggling Cumbrian wheat grower you will give up. That shift is already happening but the CAP reform and a Gatt deal will hasten it," he says.

Faced with these mounting pressures, many farmers believe that the short-term gains they are enjoying offer a limited chance to pay off some debt and invest in equipment or land. "This is an opportunity for farmers to re-group and restructure, making them better able to withstand the effects of the Gatt when it comes," said Mr David Nisbet, president of the NFU.

There are signs that some producers are already heeding his advice. Farm debt levels in England and Wales peaked at £6.6m in August 1991 according to the Midland Bank, dropping to £5.8m by October this year. Yet a survey published today by Adams, the government's farm advisory service, suggests that investment by farmers, though rising this year, is in long-term decline. Sales of farm machinery are 84 per cent lower than in 1988.

Farmers are notorious for not underplaying their misfortunes. But at least for the larger farmers, the bonuses they are currently enjoying means there is little excuse for not taking action to secure their future against the uncertainties of increased competition in years ahead. That, though, will be little consolation for the small players such as Mr Swift.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Face up to deficit by borrowing

From M C Kennedy

Sir, Stephen Ball of Morgan Grenfell could hardly put the case better than to deplore the recession leads to a loss of industrial capacity and to more unemployable labour (Letters, November 28).

Why then does he call for "massive increases in taxation and/or reductions in public expenditure" to close the budget deficit? He must surely know that such "massive" measures will lead to a correspondingly "massive" worsening of the recession, to more unemployment and to further losses of industrial capacity. Samuel Brittan, in a series of articles, has been correct in repeatedly questioning the seriousness of the budget deficit and in warning against panic over its size.

The best way of handling the deficit in present conditions is to go on borrowing. We have already seen from the experience of this year that this can be done without the rise in interest rates (and fall in security prices) which some people in the City are so fearful of.

More generally, fiscal action should always be undertaken with a view to its effects on the economy - on inflation, employment and industry.

M C Kennedy,
Fellow, University of Manchester,
53 Kingston Road,
Didsbury,
Manchester M20 2SB

Take the trade deal on table

From Sir Derek Thomas

Sir, Your leader, "Trade talks" (November 26), rightly underlines the urgency of resolving the outstanding issues in the Uruguay Round before the December 15 deadline and goes on to deplore the new problems which the US is introducing at this late stage. But, characteristically, you left out one area which is of great importance for the European services sector.

Throughout the Round, the UK has pressed for an outcome which would advance the interests of services providers in the UK and the rest of Europe. We would not pretend that this aim has yet been fully met. The commitments of many of our trading partners

could certainly be bettered.

But the Uruguay Round is more a staging post than a final destination. A worthwhile initial package of commitments certainly is now within reach and there is a framework of "clearly internationally accepted rules as a basis for more liberalisation in the future. Some of our partners fail to recognise this, and still seek a perfect outcome in their particular sector, at the risk of losing the benefits of the whole. This is short-sighted and illusory.

Surely the world's economic leaders must now secure the gains already within sight by pushing the Round to a successful conclusion. What is on the table is worth having and

we must not lose it. The alternative is a return to the protectionist tit-for-tat of the 1930s which, even without the world's present state of instability, would not bear contemplation.

To argue the services case in terms of a glass half full or half empty is to miss the point. The point for services is that for the first time there is now a glass on the table that will hold water for the future. Let's for goodness sake pick it up.

Derek Thomas,
Chairman,
Liberalisation of trade in services committee of British Industries,
Windward House,
39 King Street,
London EC2V 8DQ

Trade and service mark options

From Mr Robert A Hurst

Sir, Although I was pleased to read Robert Rice's report on November 19 ("Registration to be simplified", November 19) to the effect that the long-awaited Trade Marks Bill is to be introduced in the current parliamentary session, I should like to draw your attention to two slight errors.

First, I am afraid that the Queen's Speech was too late to influence the choice of location for the European Trade Marks Office, which (it was decided at the EU summit at the end of October) is to be located in Spain. London has accordingly missed the boat.

Second, the proposed ratification of the Madrid protocol for the registration of interna-

tional trade marks through the medium of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) is independent of the EU Directive of December 1988, which merely instructs member states to harmonise their local trade mark laws.

By 1995, companies will have the option of applying for three alternative forms of trade or service mark:
a. In the UK, under the new Trade Marks Act.
b. Internationally, through the medium of WIPO in Geneva.
c. In Europe, through the medium of the Community Trade Mark Office in Alicante.

Robert A Hurst,
D J Freeman, solicitors,
43 Fetter Lane,
London EC4A 3NA

Distinction

From Mr David Benington

Sir, The price of the FT is worth it for the articles by your excellent TV critic, Christopher Dunkley, alone.

In "Up with sex, down with violence" (November 24), he correctly shows the proper distinction and encourages those of us who would like to see more freedom of expression on TV for the things we enjoy (like sex) while deplored the depiction of aggressive and violent behaviour.

Those in continental Europe seem to understand the difference - why not we British? David Benington,
20 Morfar Way,
Bexley,
Middlesex HA4 8SL

Assumptions on benefits of UK forestry privatisation flawed

From Mr John James

Sir, Your article "The Future of the Forests" (November 23) suggests that privatisation of the Forestry Commission has some merit, particularly in addressing the commission's current shortcomings. But it makes two fundamental assumptions which need to be challenged.

First, the commission has already made headway on the issues of hidden environmental costs, bureaucracy and unfilled recreational potential for which it is criticised. Progress towards quantifying and defining the costs of environmental benefits has been made

through the new special management grant and the community woodland supplement for tree planting. The reorganisation of the commission last year has helped to improve its effectiveness and the fact that the commission's forests receive 50m visits per year indicates it fulfils its recreational potential very well.

Second, and much more importantly, there is an assumption that privatisation could protect non-economic benefits. The role of the commission has changed out of all recognition since the 1970s when timber production at all costs was its watchword. It

now takes a lead in promoting multi-purpose forestry - integrating access, landscape and wildlife conservation with timber production in its own forests and as a regulatory authority for felling and planting. This change has been hard won and like many other organisations the Woodland Trust wants to see the status quo retained, consolidated and given a chance to work. Private interests have yet to show whole-hearted enthusiasm for guarding access and conservation interests even when incentives are available.

We have major concerns that the estimated £35m-£40m

annual public subsidy which would be needed for private landowners to maintain the commission's current environmental management standards, would not be forthcoming in the current climate of public spending. Voluntary bodies like ourselves would be left with an impossible task in trying to protect woodlands of major environmental significance.

John James,
chief executive,
The Woodland Trust,
Autumn Park,
Dyfford Road,
Grantham,
Lincolnshire NG31 6LL

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20/11/93

FINANCIAL TIMES

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Monday November 29 1993

Talking to the IRA

Anyone who seeks peace in Northern Ireland, at an honourable price, should support Mr John Major today. The prime minister has been charged with duplicity, on the ground that his government has sanctioned secret contacts with the Irish Republican Army in spite of its frequent protestations that it would never negotiate with terrorists.

This is a setback for those who believe that governments must at all times behave like boy scouts, but the alternative would have been worse. Public deal-making with Sinn Féin, the political wing of the IRA, could not be countenanced by a democratically elected British administration unless the bombers of Warrington and the Shankill Road turned convincingly away from violence.

Yet a refusal to keep open unofficial lines of communication would have denied the government the chance to make its own position plain, and to take note of any peace proposals coming from the other side.

The Israelis spent some time in secret concave with the Palestine Liberation Organisation before emerging in public with their recent deal. Mr Major has not gone nearly as far as that, nor could he even if he wanted to, unlike Israel, he is not in the business of trading territory for peace.

Constitutional future

British policy is clear. If the IRA lays down its arms, and an unspecified period of "quarantine" has passed, Sinn Féin can join talks about the constitutional future of Northern Ireland. Relations with the republic of Ireland will be discussed with Dublin. Any proposals arising from such talks would have to be endorsed by the voters of Northern Ireland. The unionists would therefore retain their veto on any plan to move towards a united Ireland - a point Mr Major again needs to make plain today. Republicans would have to persuade them to change their minds. The IRA is thus invited to abandon its campaign of violence and to rely on Sinn Féin's re-entry to the political process. It can show whether its talk of peace has any substance by picking up that invitation today.

Mr Major, who has placed himself at the head of a drive to seek a political settlement of the trou-

bles, has behaved with courage, and a sense of responsibility. Certainly, as an FT report shows today, his peace initiative is in tune with business opinion in Ulster. It also reflects the feelings of most ordinary people. The prime minister aims to take advantage of a tide of popular feeling in favour of peace, while not abandoning the unionists and their right of veto. He is therefore standing by his Northern Ireland secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew, who has no reason to resign. The latter has said that the documents relating to back-door communications with the IRA will be published today. It must be presumed these will confirm that the long-standing and oft-repeated government promise to the Unionists, that the people of Northern Ireland will be able to determine their own future, will be seen to have been respected.

Limit the damage

Northern Ireland being what it is, this will not satisfy everyone. The crisis of "betrayal" from the Reverend Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists are routine; the more measured response from Mr Molyneux's larger unionist party suggests that it may be possible to limit the damage to the prime minister's peace initiative. It is often remarked that the government depends on unionist votes to shore up its uncertain parliamentary majority, but, against that, the unionists depend on the continuance in office of the Conservatives. To Ulster ears, Labour sounds pro-republican. A greater danger lies on the right wing of Mr Major's own party, where pro-unionist speeches have recently been made by Lord Tebbit and the former chancellor, Mr Norman Lamont. Initial reactions to the weekend's news, notably from Mr Lamont, suggest that the damage may be containable.

With luck, and skill in handling the house of commons, Mr Major and Sir Patrick should be able to weather today's political storm. Assuming that they do, there should be no hesitation in pressing on with the peace initiative. The next step for the prime minister will be to confirm the date for his planned summit meeting with Mr Albert Reynolds, the Irish prime minister. Friday would not be too soon.

A mega-bond for London

The rage Londoners feel over the unreliability, inadequacy and squalor of their city's transport system last week reached boiling point. A power blackout trapped tens of thousands of passengers in London Underground's tunnels. Many more were left waiting for buses or delayed in traffic jams. Others stayed at home.

If last week's chaos was a freak event, it could be forgiven. But it is merely the latest in the catalogue of misery that Londoners have to endure almost daily. If they travel underground, they face packed carriages, out-of-order escalators and cancellations. If they travel by road, they are often delayed in traffic.

It is not just passengers who suffer. London's attraction as an international centre of wealth creation is being compromised. Companies lose out directly when employees cannot make it in to work. In the long run, business could migrate to more efficient locations.

Decades of under-investment, poor management and antiquated labour practices are now bearing their bitter fruit. The urgent priority is to find extra resources. London First, the business-led group, thinks £17bn will be needed over 10 years to modernise the underground and to finance new projects such as Crossrail.

Where are such vast sums going to come from? On current plans, only half will come from central government. Given the enormous budget deficit, there is little chance of more cash from that source. In fact, further cuts are possible in this week's budget.

Passengers benefit

Wholesale privatisation is not a realistic prospect either. The underground would only become profitable if the network was shrunk and fares increased sharply. Meanwhile, although the group set up this month under Sir Alastair Morton may inject life into the government's initiative of attracting private finance for infrastructure projects, even enthusiasts recognise that subsidies will be needed before most such schemes can be profitable.

But there is no reason why this money must come from central government coffers. In so far as passengers benefit from better ser-

vices, it is right that they pay more. But it is right that those who have property in the city and those who travel on its roads should also pay their share.

What are needed are new mechanisms to raise funds. Why not earmark a portion of the capital's business rates and council taxes? After all, better public transport could increase property values. Or why not hypothecate revenue from London's street parking charges? Car-users would benefit from roads not being so crammed.

Revenue streams

Once new fund-raising devices were authorised, there would be no need to wait for the cash to trickle in. It would be possible to issue a multi-billion pound bond, secured by future revenue streams. Funds could speedily be made available to subsidise the underground's modernisation and new private-sector projects.

How should such an initiative be co-ordinated? While ministers would prefer a quango - if they could be persuaded to look at the idea at all - a democratically accountable body would be better. There should be no taxation without representation.

But ministers would not have to resurrect the ghost of the Labour-dominated Greater London Council. The new body would focus on transport alone. It would not own the underground and new projects. The relationship could be an arm's-length contract, under which the body provided investment funds in return for specified service improvements. With such contracts in place, it might even be possible to privatise the underground and start to sort out its management and labour problems.

Other ways could be found to make the body appeal more to ministers. For example, it could cover parts of the commuter belt, so ensuring it was not always Labour-run. Its authority could be limited in time, say to a decade. Ministers might even appoint its members but require investment and fund-raising plans to be approved by referendum.

Such an initiative could only be undertaken if ministers were willing to slaughter a herd of sacred cows. But, given that the alternative is continued decay, a radical approach is needed.

With barely two weeks to go in the Gatt trade negotiations, the moment of truth is fast approaching for France - for its deeply nervous government, its unequally matched agricultural and industrial lobbies, its key relationship with Germany and its vision of the European Union as a power in the world.

There are signs of movement in the long logjam over agriculture now that the Clinton administration has lifted its sights from regional to world trade issues. But Prime Minister Edouard Balladur is still talking very tough. He is threatening to block a Gatt deal if the US does not produce some speedy concessions not only in farm trade, but also on steel, textiles and future world trade rules that would submit Washington to the same disciplines as others. "We have obtained nothing of what we have asked for," he told his backbenchers last week.

On one thing only, the French prime minister has conceded. After months of letting his ministers deride Gatt's December 15 deadline as "an American date", set to suit Congress, he has acknowledged that, for better or worse, the middle of next month is decision time. Indeed, he has now cleared the decks for little else but Gatt, scheduling a parliamentary debate on Gatt before mid-December and making a trade agreement the focus of bilateral summits with European partners.

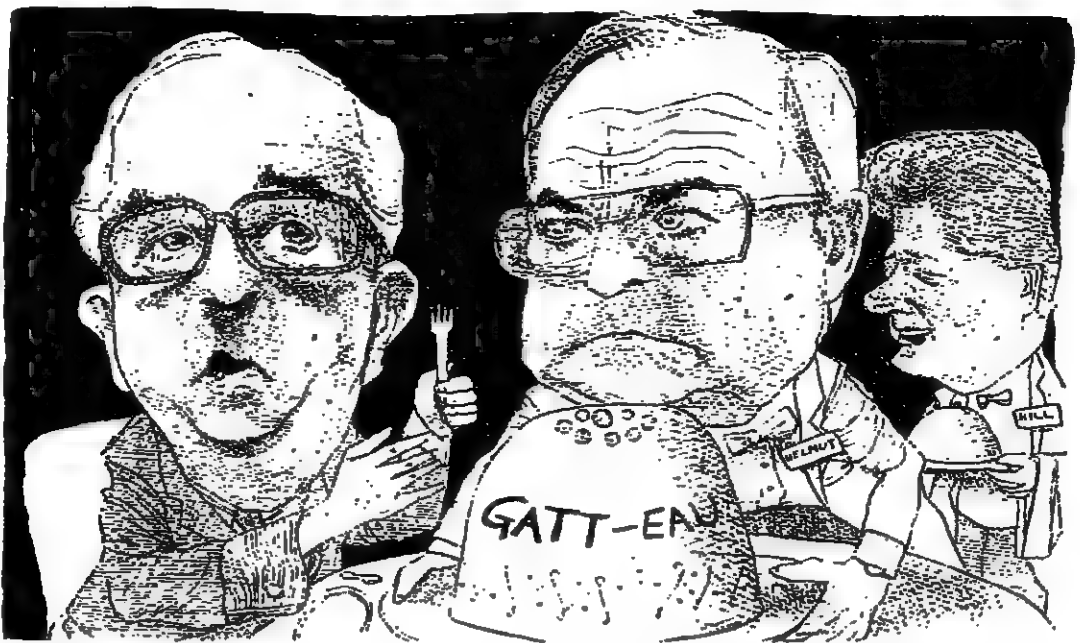
By far the most important of these is the Franco-German summit in Bonn tomorrow and Wednesday. Leaders of the world's third-largest exporter (Germany) and fourth-largest exporter (France) will not have any precise Gatt text to chew on.

But the task before Chancellor Kohl, President Mitterrand and Mr Balladur is to recast, on a world level, the historic compromise which their countries made in 1957. This gave French agriculture free run (though on price terms that protected less efficient German farmers) in exchange for German industrial partners' inside the EU they have produced a joint plan for their economies to converge; outside the EU each takes few foreign steps without the other; they have merged part of their armies in the Eurocorps; their civil servants and young people infest each other's ministries and universities; and so on.

The historic rationale of this relationship, admitted by the leaders of both Germany and France, has been to bind the Federal Republic into western Europe. But on the Gatt, the rationale is reversed - it is for Germany to persuade France not to break ranks with the common commercial policy which is the Euro-

Germany hopes France will yield to gentle persuasion and sign a Gatt deal, write David Buchan and Quentin Peel

The inconvenience of a la carte



pean Union's earliest and most lasting achievement.

In the shorter term, Mr Kohl has a tough election year ahead in 1994. He urgently needs the recovery which German industry is convinced a Gatt agreement could bring. Inside his coalition government, the foreign and economic affairs ministries, which lead for Germany on the trade issue, are headed by pro-Gatt Free Democrats.

But, if one thing is sure, it is that, while Mr Kohl is asking France to recognise its own and Europe's interest in doing a Gatt deal, he will never insist. To do so might not only endanger the position of Mr Balladur, who might be toppled by his party leader and presidential rival, Mr Jacques Chirac; it would severely strain the overall Franco-German relationship, more important to both countries than any individual policy.

Neither side sees Gatt as a real threat to their relationship. An Ely-

see official says: "We do not see Gatt as a confrontation with Germany, but rather with the US and it is easier in France to stir up anti-

American reflexes than anti-German ones."

The same sentiment exists on the Rhine. "It is not a question of pressure by one side on the other. That is a rather Anglo-Saxon formulation," says Mr Ingo Kolboom of the German Foreign Policy Association in Bonn. "The relationship does not function like that. It is a matter of mutual persuasion..." and the French know that they are a modern industrial state.

Assuming such self-knowledge on the part of many French is, however, a bit risky. They regard Gatt as a pistol held to the nation's head and see images of their past collective life passing nostalgically in front of them: Van Gogh's golden wheat fields, which would lie forever fallow because of the Blair House cuts in subsidised cereal exports; or arty Truffaut films, which would be pushed out of French cinemas by Hollywood blockbusters given even freer rein under Gatt.

France is only now coming to political terms with an industrialisation process far slower than that

of many of its partners. Whereas, for instance, the rural population in Britain had shrunk to 42 per cent in 1981, it was only well after the second world war, in 1954, that France's rural community dwindled to that level.

Since then, however, the modernisation of agriculture has increased space. Active farmers now account for 8 per cent of the population. The average size of farms is more than 30 hectares and half are now run as companies. Mechanisation and flight from the land has resulted in the paradox that as it has become a world "agri-power", so France has ceased to be a mainly agrarian society.

But French farmers retain an outside political clout, providing the swing vote of more than 10 per cent in a fifth of the National Assembly's 557 seats. No less than a third of the country's 36,000 mayors describe themselves as farmers or retired farmers. And in the Hotel de Ville in Paris sits Mr Chirac who has never forgotten how much he enjoyed himself as agriculture minister in the early 1970s.

However, there are now faint signs of the emergence of countervailing pressure to the farm lobby. The exporters of (unsubsidised) wines and spirits have come out squarely in favour of Gatt. The house magazine of the Institut de l'Entreprise, a select club of France's top captains of industry, recently dared to say what its members have been privately telling Mr Balladur in an article entitled "Let's hope France is bluffing".

It stated: "If France were to carry the blame for the breakdown of a multilateral trade accord wished by all its partners, it would very quickly lose all the standing it has acquired with its foreign clients over decades."

This is precisely the message Bonn would like to see spread in France, but dare not to do so overtly itself. "We have been very careful not to be seen to dictate or interfere in the French debate," says a senior diplomat in Bonn. "We have simply tried to suggest to some leading people in the French media that there may be another, more positive side to the Gatt. We have not been very successful."

Certainly, the big fear among Gatt's supporters on the both sides of the Rhine is that Mr Balladur has left it too late to start selling a world trade agreement to his country. "Something must be found which makes it impossible for the French to say No," says the German diplomat. And in the German view, a large part of the answer must come from Washington.

Yet to win his new democrat spurs

After the White House victory on the North American Free Trade Agreement, many Republicans began to revise their opinion of President Bill Clinton. His advocacy of lower trade barriers with Mexico was as passionate, it seemed, as his support for the principles he enunciated so clearly in the NAFTA debate, conservatives would flock to the Clinton cause. The impromptu NAFTA coalition could be converted into a permanent congressional force for market-oriented reform.

It was an inspired if mischievous, thought. But is Mr Clinton really a new style of Democrat? He only began to fight hard for NAFTA once he realised a defeat could undermine his authority in foreign policy and perhaps his standing as president. If you consider his first year as a whole, his record is less impressive. Indeed, only a few months ago, Mr Clinton was looking about as modern as Walter Mondale in 1984.

Having just forced through a budget that raised the top rate of personal income tax by a third, he did not seem remotely concerned by the adverse impact this domestic tariff might have on incentives for high-paid individuals or the owners of

domestic market would be reserved for US and foreign companies.

So who is the real Bill Clinton? Is he the ardent advocate of global free trade, the man who promises to "compete, not retreat." Or is he the old-style Mondale democrat, keen on seeking the rich, revving up the economy and bashing the Japanese? The answer will become apparent only as the coming year's debate on social policy begins to heat up. A deal with the right is certainly conceivable. Most conservative Democrats and Republicans are doubtful about central elements of the Clinton healthcare plan, such as the proposed caps on growth of private insurance premiums and the "mandate" requiring all employers to pay 80 per cent of employees' healthcare costs. But many enthusiastically support other elements, such as the attempt to increase cost efficiency by promoting "managed competition" between private-sector providers of care. If Mr Clinton is willing to negotiate, he might be able to assemble a centrist coalition similar to that which triumphed on NAFTA.

Similar considerations apply in welfare reform and job training. Many Republicans were impressed by Mr Clinton's campaign pledge to introduce a strict two-year limit on



MICHAEL PROWSE
ON AMERICA

successful small businesses. The only thing that mattered about the budget was its "fairness" - the fact that nearly all the new taxes were to be borne by the wealthiest 1-2 per cent of families.

But for a Senate filibuster, Mr Clinton's budget would have included a wholly unnecessary short-term Keynesian stimulus. In these pre-NAFTA days, Mr Clinton's rhetoric on trade was far less enlightened. He tried to inflict a grass form of "managed trade" on Japan, involving quantitative targets for various industrial sectors. In stark contradiction to the rule-based Gatt system which he is now championing, it sought guarantees from Japan that chunks of its

welfare payments, after which most recipients would have to enrol in training schemes or accept jobs.

Conservatives recognise the need to upgrade training to give workers displaced by global competition a better chance of acquiring new skills. They would probably support a Clinton job-training initiative. If it incorporated market-oriented mechanisms, such as vouchers.

There are good political reasons for Mr Clinton to move to the right on social policy. By firmly occupying the middle ground of US politics, he would reduce his vulnerability to a presidential challenge from a moderate Republican in 1996.

Yet it is far from clear that he will jump this way. Mr Clinton's top social policy advisers, such as his wife Hillary and Mr Robert Reich, the Labour Secretary, seem less market-oriented than the Treasury officials who played a big role in the trade debate. After NAFTA, Mr Clinton is bound to want to restore cordial relations with organised labour. All this may preclude radicalism on healthcare, welfare or job training. The notion that the NAFTA coalition can be transformed into a permanent force for radical reform may be too good to be true. Mr Clinton has yet to earn his new democrat spurs.

Younger model sought

Good to see the Treasury at last employing outside help to assist it decide the fate of its creaking economic model.

Allison Sprague, an economist and computer modelling expert at KPMG Peat Marwick, has passed her slide rule over several of the outfits which might have a crack at running the model, should the huffins throw in the towel themselves.

Her report is about as closely guarded a secret as the Budget. Nevertheless, Observer gathers that the general idea is partial privatisation, by way of soliciting advice on updates to the model.

A former colleague of one of the Treasury's advisers, Patrick Minford, Sprague has spent several weeks on the telephone to the likes of the London Business School, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, and Warwick University.

One notable omission is the Centre for Economics and Business Research. Its boss, Doug McWilliams, recently uncovered an embarrassing flaw in the way the model treats consumer spending. But it looks as if a degree of residual Whitehall amour propre prevents his flair being directly

acknowledged - at least for now.

Tango guru

Sir Alan Walters, erstwhile economic guru to Lady Thatcher, recently popped into a Cape Town business conference.

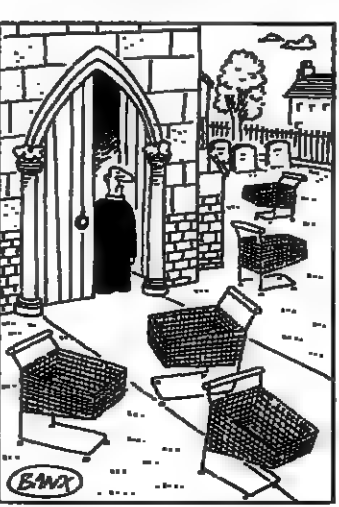
Chairing a discussion between South African finance minister Derek Key and his African National Congress counterpart, Trevor Manuel, Sir Alan appeared mildly surprised at the lack of flying fur.

He shouldn't have been. The two have a public policy tango; Keys espouses the "social objectives" of economic policy and Manuel speaks of "flying the flag for capitalism". Sir Alan nevertheless demonstrated a sense of humour by presenting them each with a copy of Lady Thatcher's book *The Downing Street Years* - itself jam-packed with public tangos which fell apart when the going got tough.

Olympian struggles

The hunt is on for a chief executive of the Sydney Olympic Games organising committee, but Rod McGeoch, a 47-year-old Sydney lawyer, couldn't care less. That's odd, because McGeoch led Sydney's successful September

OBSERVER



hid to host the games in the year 2000. McGeoch is cheesed off at lack of official recognition for those who worked on the bid; he has walked out.

There have been other hiccups too. John Fahey, the New South Wales premier, has incurred some ire for having snatched responsibility for the games from Bruce Baird, NSW transport minister. Baird had done most of the work in the bid run-up. Then there are the rumours of a "budget blowout", euphemistically disguising possible

capital expenditure excesses.

Finally, John Valder, the bid's main fundraiser, claims he has been kicked off the organising committee's board because no-one had remembered to appoint a woman.

The first task of the new chief executive will be to engender a little more *feu d'esprit* amongst the organisers.

Grecian earn

Beware of gift-bearing Greeks, particularly politicians. Constantine Mitsotakis, no longer Greece's prime minister but merely a humble backbencher, is getting a grilling over who or what provided his impressive private collection of antiquities.

While in office his daughter - Dora Bakoyannis - served as culture minister, fending off archaeologists' allegations that part of her father's collection of Minoan vases and Cretan jewellery - more than 1,000 items - derived from a looted ancient cemetery.

Mitsotakis probably won't face formal accusations of antiquity stealing, since 1979 he has had a private collector's licence. But Melina Mercouri - she of the 1980s campaign to get the British Museum to return the Elgin Marbles to Greece - is now the new culture minister. Mercouri is renewing the Elgin

war, and she is also investigating the Mitsotakis mystery.

Low interest

Kenneth Clarke, Britain's Chancellor, influences interest rates but even he can't offer the sort of deal West Bromwich Building Society currently has.

The West Brom is giving a BSkyB satellite dish plus a year's free subscription (worth about \$450) to everyone who takes out one of its discount mortgages.

Glenn Elliott, West Brom's chief executive, hails from Perth in Australia. There it's common practice to give away things like solar panels with mortgages. "But solar panels probably wouldn't go down too well in Britain," says the man from West Brom.

Room service

The Queen's Moat House hotel in Bournemouth is making an offer which can hardly be refused; spend three days there at the New Year and get three nights for £5 apiece next summer.

Given the hotel chain's pre-tax £1.04bn loss for its last year of trading and its £1.18bn debt, Bournemouth's seem a generous offer. But watch out for small print; such as "while stocks last".

Satellite network for VW dealers

By Raymond Snoddy

Scientific-Atlanta, the communications technology group, is to provide a private satellite network for Volkswagen dealers all over Europe.

When it is complete the VSAT (very small aperture terminal) network will be by far the largest in Europe with several thousand terminals.

As many as 300 dealers are to be linked to the network within the next year mainly in the eastern part of Germany where the telecommunications infrastructure is poor.

It is believed to be the first example of a manufacturing company, as opposed to financial services groups, setting up its own VSAT network in Europe.

The network will handle everything from data communications and broadcast video for staff training to credit-card verification and the provision of in-store music. After the links are established with VW dealers in eastern Germany the network will be expanded to cover dealers in the rest of Germany and then across Europe.

VSAT networks are common in the US and by the end of last year more than 100,000 terminals had been installed worldwide, adding up to a \$350m a year business. They are less common in Europe with an estimated 2,000 terminals in use, mostly in Germany. Apart from financial services they are mainly used by governments.

In the Volkswagen deal Scientific-Atlanta will be the equipment provider and V-Crest Systems Europe, a wholly-owned Volkswagen subsidiary will manage the project.

Scientific-Atlanta claims that VSAT networks can offer 20-30 per cent discounts on traditional land line communications. Volkswagen says in many parts of eastern Germany it is impossible to link dealers using a traditional terrestrial network.

The Atlanta-based company decided to enter the European VSAT market last year mainly because of the European Union's moves towards deregulation of telecommunications markets.

Bayer starts drive to grow in China

By Tony Walker in Beijing

Bayer, the German chemicals and pharmaceuticals group, is to invest \$20m in six Chinese enterprises as part of a drive to establish a comprehensive presence in China.

An umbrella agreement was signed at the weekend in Beijing with the Chinese Ministry of Chemical Industry and subsidiary agreements with prospective partners.

Ventures include plastics manufacturing, the production of tanning agents and dyes, and the packaging of photographic film.

Mr Dieter Becher, a Bayer board member responsible for Asia, announced the establishment of a holding company in Beijing to oversee Bayer's business in China, one of the first such foreign holding companies on the mainland.

Mr Becher said: "Bringing our best technologies here is the best way a company like Bayer can contribute to the development of an advanced chemical industry."

Bayer's announcement follows a visit to China earlier

this month by Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Agreements signed during the Kohl visit totalled more than \$2m and included the sale of six Airbus A340s and the construction of an 18-kilometre underground link in Guangzhou.

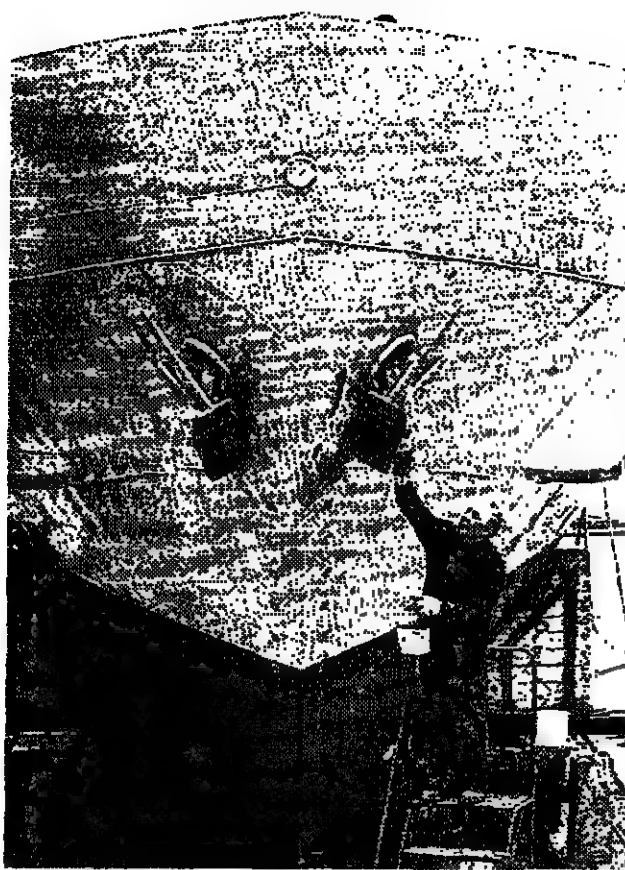
Bayer's decision to establish a presence in China also reflects growing competition among chemicals and pharmaceutical companies for a share of a booming market.

Mr Becher said Bayer's exports to China totalled DM520m (\$307m) in 1992, but "it would be difficult to increase this on the basis of imports alone".

Bayer's umbrella agreement with the Chemical Industry Ministry covers co-operation in planning and construction of chemical plant, and in engineering and technology transfer. The German company will also manufacture Baygon, its well-known insecticide, in Guangdong province. Marketing starts next year.

Projects under consideration include production of pharmaceuticals, and animal health and crop protection products.

Vosper set for sales



Coin News

Vosper Thornycroft, the UK manufacturer of warships, is hoping for export success with its new cutter. The 34-metre vessel, designed for HM Customs and Excise, has been built with anti-smuggling and offshore patrol duties in mind.

Chelsfield comes to market valued at £250m

By Paul Taylor in London

Chelsfield, the UK private property company led by Mr Elliott Bernard, is coming to market through a placing and intermediaries offer likely to value the group at between £240m (\$357m) and £250m.

On this basis the group, founded by Mr Bernard with £200,000 of capital in 1986, will rank as the 12th largest quoted British property group.

Chelsfield will raise a total of £110m in new capital, £50m through the placing and intermediaries offer and £60m from existing shareholders to coincide with the flotation.

At the same time the group, which had fixed assets of £356m at the end of June and has current net assets of £141m, has agreed to acquire a portfolio of properties from Allied Lyons Pension Fund for £30.6m, of which £15m will be in the form of new shares.

Mr Bernard, who is expected to retain around a 30 per cent stake in the group after flotation, said yesterday that the new money raised "will enable the company to continue to enlarge and develop our UK properties and to take advantage of the opportunities which exist in current market conditions".

Chelsfield will come to market with a portfolio of wholly-owned UK properties with a total value of about £250m and annual rental income of about £15m - sufficient to cover existing overheads, interest costs and forecast dividends.

The group's UK portfolio is notable for the number of income-producing properties, particularly in central London, with refurbishment and development potential.

In addition the group holds interests in a business park near Heathrow.

Outside the UK Chelsfield's interests include a 50:50 US joint venture with P&O, Laing Properties which owns 6,700 garden apartments in the south east of the US. Laing itself is expected to be floated as a property investment trust early next year.

The issue is sponsored by Hambros Bank and stockbrokers Zoete & Bevan and the issue price, which will be based on an existing net asset value of 185p per share, is due to be announced on December 2.

The Markets this week

Starting on page 19

PETER MARTIN: GLOBAL INVESTOR

Japan's financial markets will have more economic statistics to absorb next week, but the forces driving share prices down owe as much to psychology and politics as to economics. Meanwhile, in Europe, investors' eyes are turning to smaller stocks. Page 19

PETER NORMAN: ECONOMICS NOTEBOOK

When Kenneth Clarke presents his Budget tomorrow, some of his decisions will be based on doubtful statistics or even flawed. Page 19

BONDS:

The floating rate note market, which has enjoyed a spectacular recovery over the last two years, is expected to flourish further in 1994. Page 23

EQUITIES:

Much of last week's improvement in London was rooted in a shift from caution to confidence in the derivatives markets. But will the upturn continue? Page 20

EMERGING MARKETS:

Chile is no longer as dynamic as other South American countries, but its market sophistication is unparalleled on the continent. Page 21

CURRENCIES:

Tuesday's surprise half-point cut in UK base rates has seen uncertainty and drama return. Page 28

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Moment of truth looms for Ferruzzi

Bankers and shareholders vote on the largest shake-up in Italian corporate history, writes Haig Simonian

The next 72 hours could be decisive for Italy's Ferruzzi group as bankers and shareholders gather for a string of meetings to determine its future.

The fate of the Ferruzzi Finanziaria (Ferfin) holding company and Montedison, its main industrial arm, goes much further than a tussle over debts. Ferfin and its subsidiaries, which include Edison (energy), Calcestruzzo (cement) and Eridania Bagnoli-Say (sugar), comprise Italy's second-biggest private company, with more than 52,000 employees and sales of £18,900m last year.

The rescue package prepared by Mediobanca, the Milan merchant bank, and other big domestic creditors is easily the biggest restructuring in Italian - and probably European - corporate history. Ferfin's net debt is now standing at more than £28,500m (£13,530m), while group losses last year were £1,667m.

The decisive meeting will come tonight, when the boards of Ferfin and Montedison gather to assess creditors' response to the controversial

rescue plan unveiled by Mediobanca in mid-October. The scheme involves interest moratoriums, restructuring of borrowings and the conversion of debt to equity. A few subsidiaries will be sold, others will go into joint ventures in a package designed to lighten Ferfin's interest burden, prune costs and concentrate on cash-generating subsidiaries.

Gaining the banks' approval remains a cliffhanger, however. Although Ferfin's Italian bank creditors backed the plan early on, foreign institutions have been less malleable. The position of foreign banks may appear marginal, as they account for only a fraction of the group's total borrowings. However, they are in a strong position as their lending is concentrated on a handful of subsidiaries, such as Montedison, which has borrowed heavily in the US. Indeed they could scupper the scheme as

they account for almost all the loans to Montedison's big US-based Himont polyethylene subsidiary, which they could put in default. Together, the foreign banks, which include Barclays, Citibank, Credit Suisse, Deutsche Bank and UBS, are owed £4,500m.

The past week has brought a détente between Mediobanca and the foreign creditors. An updated plan has removed a number of contentious issues by taking some big US operations, such as Montedison USA and Himont, out of the restructuring.

However, observers will only learn tonight whether the changes have proved enough. Foreign bankers have welcomed the changes, but stress that it is impossible to meet the deadline of today.

The stakes are high. Mr Guido Rossi, Ferfin's tough chairman, who was brought in by Italian bank credi-

tors after a boardroom shake-up earlier this year, has threatened to instigate bankruptcy proceedings and even to resign if he does not receive the support of banks representing at least 80 per cent of Ferfin's borrowings. The latest Mediobanca letter demands 85 per cent acceptance.

Mr Rossi's challenges are taken with a pinch of salt by foreign bankers, who see the moves as part of the war of wills in recent weeks. But few care to brush off the challenge outright, especially as bankruptcy proceedings in the slow Italian courts could drag on for a decade.

If enough banks agree to the plan, shareholders' meetings will be held tomorrow to approve Ferfin's recapitalisation and on Wednesday for Montedison.

For Ferfin, the plan envisages raising £2,832m via rights issues and warrants to buy new shares. The

scheme is partly a book-keeping exercise, as creditor banks will largely be swapping debt for equity. Shareholders will also be asked to approve issuing a further £2,000m in new shares and £800m in bonds over the next 18 months.

Similar action is in store for Montedison. The rescue plan contains measures to raise £5,173m, assuming all warrants are exercised. The board will also seek approval to raise a further £1,000m in shares and £500m of bonds over the next 18 months.

Even assuming a last-minute compromise is reached with the foreign creditors and enough banks accept the scheme, many details remain to be clarified.

How Ferfin will pay to maintain a holding in Montedison is one. The Mediobanca plan envisages Ferfin paying £400m for new shares. The cash will come from its own recapitalisation, and from a partial sale of its stake in Gemina, a big holding company. According to the plan, Ferfin's stake in Montedison will fall from 49 per cent to 30 per cent.

This week: Company news

VOLVO Renault marriage proposal moves closer to altar

By Hugh Carnegie in Stockholm

The fate of Volvo's controversial plan to marry its car and truck operations to Renault, the state-owned French giant, should be decided this week by a handful of Swedish pension funds and insurance companies.

Although the special shareholders' meeting is not until December 7, the outcome should be clear by the end of the week as key institutions make up their minds which way to vote.

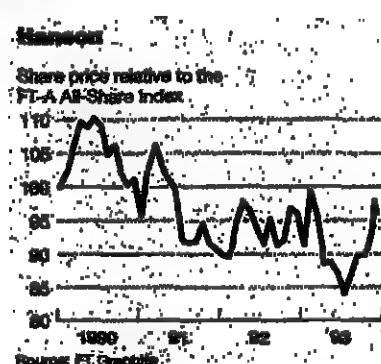
With 30 per cent of the voting capital already in the bag for Volvo, the odds are now in favour of the merger winning approval.

However, a further twist lies in the intention of Aktiespararna, the small shareholders' association, to make a legal challenge on the grounds that the merger requires a change in Volvo's articles of association. Such a change would require a two-thirds majority rather than a simple majority.

Decisions to watch for are from three insurance companies that earlier expressed opposition because of their scepticism over French promises to privatise Renault and the terms of a subsequent state golden share.

Trygg-Hansa and SPP, sister insurance companies that hold respectively 1.4 per cent and 4.5 per cent of Volvo's voting capital, are set to announce their verdicts on Thursday and Friday.

Skandia, with 3.7 per cent, is also likely to decide this week. Its chief executive, Mr Björn Wolrath, originally lambasted the Volvo-Renault deal, but is thought to have been mollified by assurances from the French government. Other key voters are the pension and investment funds of Sweden's two leading banks, Scandinavianiska Enskilda Banken and Svenska Handelsbanken, which control 18 per cent of the votes. The power of reason, Page 9



HANSON Coal strike casts shadow on year

With the US coal strike apparently moving towards a settlement, Hanson may have some good news for its shareholders when it reports annual profits on Thursday.

The strike cost Hanson \$20m in the third quarter and could have cost \$80m-\$100m in the fourth, to the end of September, so the total could be \$100m for the year. Investors are keen to see a settlement, the only question is what concessions the coal producers will have had to give.

The market is also hoping for a dividend increase, although forecasts are for a fall in pre-tax profits from £1.28m (FRS basis) in 1992 to £1.05m-£1.07m, and around \$50m less excluding disposal profits. Hanson pays its dividends quarterly, and has paid 2.85p for each of the last four payments. Some feel an increase is due, perhaps to as much as 3p.

Another concern is the level of gearing following the \$3.2bn (£2.1bn) purchase of Quantum Chemical, which went through on the last day of the financial year. Gearing could top 80 per cent, depending on provisions and asset revaluations. This explains Hanson's disposals drive. After last week's two deals worth £166m, there may be more news. Investors may also look for hints on management succession following the promotion of Mr Derek Bonham, chief executive, to deputy chairman.

OTHER COMPANIES Dresdner to keep up banking momentum

If there is one sector which is apparently able to defy the deep German recession, it is banking. This was proved last week when Commerzbank, the smallest of the big three, reported operating profits - after provisions for bad and doubtful debts - up 52 per cent in the first 10 months.

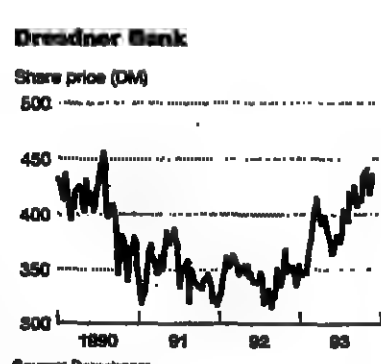
Dresdner Bank, the second biggest, reports its figures on Thursday. Like Commerzbank, it will benefit from buoyant securities markets, but analysts will focus their attention not so much on the absolute level of profits but on provisioning against sharply increased domestic credit risks.

Life insurance: Japan's eight leading companies in this sector release their half-year results today. The industry is going through a period of tough trading. Sales of insurance policies and personal pensions slipped last year.

Thyssen: The big German steel, trading and engineering group announces annual results this week - possibly Tuesday - amid rumours that it is about to pass its dividend. Weighed down by weak steel trading, Thyssen made a pre-tax loss of DM515m (\$300m) in the first half.

ABSA: South Africa's biggest banking and financial group is expected to show strong first-half growth at the operating level when it reports on Tuesday.

Basf: The UK brewing, hotels and retail group is expected to report on Wednesday a 5 per cent increase in



full-year pre-tax profits to about £450m. Brewing profits are likely to be hit.

News Corp: Today is the deadline for submissions to the Australian Stock Exchange on Rupert Murdoch's contentious plan to issue shares with "super" voting rights on a pro rata basis to existing shareholders. The ASX would need to change its listing rules to permit the News Corp scheme.

Grand Metropolitan: A £175m (\$260m) restructuring charge will reduce pre-tax profits for the year from £913m to about £770m. However, Thursday's announcement is expected to reveal a brighter picture at the trading level, including the IDV spirits division, Burger King and North American food operations.

Potential investors in Credito Italiano, Italy's first big bank privatisation, will learn on Saturday, the pricing for the deal. In the state holding company, is selling most of its 87 per cent holding of ordinary shares.

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November, 1993

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COMPANIES AND FINANCE

Dutch publisher pulls out of battle for Extel

By Paul Taylor

VNU, the Dutch publishing group, has dropped out of the bid to take over London-based Extel Financial, the on-line financial information service company put up for sale two months ago by its owners, United Newspapers.

VNU had submitted an "indicative" bid for Extel last month and was believed to be one of the front-runners. But Mr Joep Brentjens, VNU's chairman, told Amsterdam's *Het Financieel Dagblad* newspaper that United Newspapers' asking price was too high.

Mr Brentjens said VNU recently broke off talks with United Newspapers, but he declined to reveal the asking price. Dutch newspapers had

put VNU's offer at about £115m (£85.5m).

"We were very interested in a part of Extel, company information, but the other activities were less suitable for VNU," Mr Brentjens was quoted as saying.

VNU is best known as a publisher of consumer and professional magazines, but it also owns minority stakes in the Dutch television station RTL4 and operates several on-line financial and professional information services in the US, some of which are similar to the services provided by Extel Financial.

Many of the world's largest information providers have expressed interest in buying the 121-year old organisation and about 40 potential suitors

are thought to have approached Veronis Suhler, the US investment bank managing the auction.

Other bidders known to have expressed an interest in the past include FT Profile, the on-line information service owned by the Financial Times, and Standard & Poor's, the international credit rating agency.

However, Reuters, the global information company, ruled itself out as a potential bidder at an early stage.

Extel Financial made an estimated profit of about £5m on sales of £33m last year, but soaked up £5m in investment in technology. United Newspapers is expected to use the proceeds from the sale to reduce borrowings.

NEWS DIGEST

Dart ahead 30% in first half

Dart Group, the aviation services and distribution concern, made progress in the six months to September 30, with pre-tax profits up 30 per cent from £965,000 to £1,250,000. Turnover rose 27 per cent to £27m.

Mr Philip Meeson, chairman, said that although margins remained tight, increasingly more business was being won throughout the group. This, coupled with continued attention to costs and overheads, was enabling a resumption of profit growth.

"Trading in the second half continued to be satisfactory. Earnings per share increased from 4.4p to 5.8p, while an unchanged interim dividend of 1.3p is declared."

Mr Grant Westcott has been appointed finance director with effect from September 22 1993.

Cambridge Water

Mr Peter Shaw, chairman of Cambridge Water, said that water resources, much depleted in the four year "drought", had now recovered to near-average levels.

The statutory water com-

pany announced profits ahead of £1.77m pre-tax for the six months to September 30, against £1.69m last time. Turnover improved to £7.63m (£7.23m).

Mr Shaw said that the rate of new connections was slightly higher than in the last two years.

Earnings per £1 share worked through at 39.4p (40.0p); the interim dividend goes up 10p to 6.5p.

Scottish Inv Trust

Scottish Investment Trust lifted its net asset value per share by 29 per cent - from 217.3p to a record 280p - over the 12 months to October 31.

The independently-managed international trust saw net revenue improve by 14 per cent to £14.1m (£12.4m). After the preference dividend, earnings per stock unit emerged at 6.48p (4.82p).

The recommended final dividend goes up to 3.2p, bringing the total to 4.9p (4.82p).

Fulcrum Inv Trust

Net asset value per capital share of Fulcrum Investment Trust stood at 63.12p at the half year ended October 31, against 48.11p six months earlier and 34.04p for the comparable period.

However, because of a re-

financing which was completed at the end of June last year, and two new loan facilities in sterling and dollars which were agreed before the period end, last year's figures were not comparable.

Net revenue amounted to £487,467 for earnings per income share of 4.43p. A second interim dividend of 1.4p makes a total for the year to date of 2.8p.

Fidelity European

Fidelity European Values, an investment trust, is attempting to raise £17.6m via a conditional placing of new shares and warrants.

Other units are being placed at 170p each, with existing shareholders having the right to apply for five new units for every 34 ordinary shares and/or warrants they own.

The trust also plans to issue a further £4.4m of index-linked debentures to keep the trust at the 35 per cent gearing level it had at launch in November 1991.

Meanwhile, Johnson Fry has raised £42m for its second utilities investment trust. Applications for income shares have been accepted in full. For the zero dividend preference shares, applications for up to 100,000 shares have been accepted in full; larger applications have been scaled back.

Administrators draft a concluding chapter

Andrew Jack on the final stages of the long drawn out sale of most of the Maxwell businesses

There may be a long epilogue to come, but the administrators to Maxwell Communication Corporation are drafting a concluding chapter to their magnum opus following the sale of most of the businesses in the public empire of the late Mr Robert Maxwell.

Creditors to MCC may be able to receive much of the benefit through a dividend early in the new year, as the proceeds of the sale of the group's principal businesses in the US trickle through.

Accountants at Price Waterhouse and their advisers will still need perhaps as long as a decade to finish tracing assets, pursue litigation and unravel in the most efficient manner a network of 400 MCC companies.

But substantial realisations to creditors will come shortly from the sales of Official Airline Guide (OAG) to Reed Elsevier in September for £417m, and of Macmillan to Paramount Communications earlier this month for \$53.75m (£37.1m).

Still outstanding in both cases is the "pre-packaged" Chapter 11 exit under US insolvency law which will permit completion of the sale of the companies. That requires expiry of the "bar date" on new claims against the Maxwell businesses from creditors who are not yet identified. For both OAG and Macmillan these will have expired in the next few weeks.

Mr Mark Homan, one of the

joint administrators and head of insolvency at Price Waterhouse in London, is confident that his team has done all it can to find any outstanding liabilities. "We have identified what the books reveal; heaven knows what they don't show," he says.

The presence of a "bar date" beyond which no new claims will be admitted is one of the advantages Mr Homan will concede of US over English insolvency law - where the position is more ambiguous.

Another is the presence of a specialist US bankruptcy court, which he says has helped the speed of the process.

Against that, the administrators have been forced into a very delicate and unprecedented process of negotiating a path between the sometimes contradictory procedures of the two jurisdictions - the result of MCC's directors filing for protection in New York at the same time as the group entered administration in London.

If there are no new claims before the bar dates, Mr Homan says: "That will leave us free to upstream the money."

The proceeds will then pass through two intermediate holding companies before being repatriated to the MCC parent for a distribution.

There are still issues to be finalised over the tax bills on

the sales. The administrators need 20 days to ensure they do not liquidate any companies in the MCC network before taking full advantage of offsetting any proceeds against tax losses elsewhere in the group.

Mr Homan says he was happy with the way in which OAG and Macmillan were sold: the former by negotiated settlement as a result of some of the technical and regulatory difficulties involved; the latter by sealed bids, which he believes to be highly unusual in a US insolvency. He says: "Paragon's offer was significantly above the next highest price to 'make us feel the process was justified' despite some tensions at the time."

Not all money will go to the unsecured creditors in the group: there are preferential stockholders in OAG to be paid first, for instance, as well as mortgage payments to deal with.

There are also professional fees, which he estimates will finally total 3 per cent of realisations. Including lawyers and bankers, the total will run to \$50m or more. "I've had incredible value," he says. "It's unfair to criticise such dedicated professionals."

Some money from sales of the non-US MCC businesses has been retained to fund exist-

ing and future costs. That has included about \$100m from some 30 businesses and 40 properties, leaving just a handful of assets left to sell.

In the US, the only significant remaining asset is Standard Rate & Data, the advertising industry information service. It remains because it might have been sold with OAG, since they share a common computer system. In the event, Reed did not want to buy the company, so it is being marketed separately. It is likely to raise somewhere in the \$50m-\$100m range. A few more millions will come from some companies which could have been sold with Macmillan, such as the Advertising Black Book.

Any remaining proceeds for creditors will come from claims against third parties. Mr Homan is reluctant to be drawn on the subject, but says: "We are considering a claim against the auditors" - Coopers & Lybrand. There may also be legal action against other professional advisers, and insurance companies reluctant to pay up.

In addition, Mr Homan says cryptically that he is considering actions to recover "not trivial sums" from creditors who may have gained an unfair advantage above others by transferring assets at undervalue or

obtaining undue preferences. He says that there may be recoveries in the "high tens of millions" as a result of investigations work into tracing money illegally removed from the group.

The administrators are still running a 1,000-line computer programme to help determine the value and timing of dividend payments. There may be an intermediate one in January, or a single larger sum in March once the US bankruptcy proceedings are complete.

On current estimates of realisations, it is believed that the total is likely to be around 40p in the pound, towards the upper end of the 20p-40p range quoted earlier this year before an additional 9p from the proceeds of any successful litigation.

Meanwhile, Mr Homan is beginning to reflect on the wider lessons to be learnt from the administration, not least of which is his concern at arbitrageurs who have traded about half of MCC's debt since its collapse.

He says they often peer his staff in a hungry search for information which it may not be in the best interests of creditors to reveal.

Since they keep changing, it is difficult to keep them informed. He also argues that their interests are fundamentally divergent from other creditors - often favouring break-up or reconstruction of a business.

Stagecoach pays £9m for Western Travel

By Charles Batchelor, Transport Correspondent

Stagecoach, the operator of regional bus services, is to buy Western Travel, another bus company, for £9.25m, in a deal which brings to three the number of acquisitions since Stagecoach was floated in April.

To finance the purchase, Stagecoach will issue 3m new shares valued at £4.75m, £4m worth of loan notes and pay £500,000 in cash. In addition it will lend Western Travel £2.1m to pre-finance the payment of a special dividend of 2.5m to the vendors.

Western Travel made a pre-tax profit of £1.8m on turnover of £33.9m in 1992. It had net assets of £5.5m at that date. The company operates 650 buses and employs 1,700 people.

Western Travel takes Stagecoach, which is based in Perth, into three new geographical areas.

Its C&G subsidiary operates in Cheltenham, Gloucester, Swindon and Stroud; Midland Red (South) is in Warwickshire and north Oxfordshire, while Red and White Services operates in rural South Wales.

CROSS BORDER M&A DEALS

BIDDER/INVESTOR	TARGET	SECTOR	VALUE	COMMENT
Deutsche Bank (Germany)	Sanofi-Sintabo (Italy)	Banking	£185m	Buying controlling stake
Gruppo Syntro (Mexico)	Kaiser-Roth (US)	Hospital	£156.4m	Continues Mexican buying abroad
Witcon & Gibbs (UK)	Unit of BTR (UK)	Wholesale distribution	£80.5m	BTR concentrating resources
Wheatley TAT (US)	Unit of Harsco (UK/US)	Oil equipment	£55m	Begins peripheral disposals
Corporate Express (US)	Unit of Harsco (UK/US)	Stationary	£110m	In debt cutting drive
P&G (UK/Switzerland)	Shanghai Container Port (China)	Materials handling	£54m	Each to take 25%
Gaz de France (France)	Novoco (Canada)	Gas distribution	£50.5m	Taking 24% stake
Papaloo (US)	Kentucky Fried Chicken (UK)	Catering	est \$40m	Buying out Forte
Chia Pacific (China)	Swire Aviation (HK)	Air cargo	£10.1m	China's HK expansion continues
Bormes (Germany)	Intersubmarine (Russia)	Engineering	n/a	Taking 31% stake

This announcement appears as a matter of record only. November, 1993

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Closing
November 26, 1993

All three notes having been sold, this advertisement must appear as a matter of record only.

Deutsche Centralbodenkredit-AG

DM 50,000,000
Floating Rate Öffentliche Pfandbriefe of 1993/2001, Emission 1058

Issue Price: 100%

Interest Rate: 6 1/2% p.a. payable in arrears on October 20, 1994 for the period from November 26, 1993 up to and including October 24, 1994, thereafter 10 1/2% p.a. less two times Six-Months-DME-Libor, payable semi-annually in arrears on April 20 and October 20 of each year. The deduction shall not exceed 10 1/2% p.a.

Repayment: October 20, 2001 at par

Listing: Düsseldorf

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Banque Paribas
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The relevant interest payment date will be May 31, 1994.

Agent Bank:
Banque Paribas Luxembourg
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BusinessWeek

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Notice is hereby given that for the Interest Period 26th November, 1993 to 26th February, 1994 the Notes will carry a Rate of Interest of 3/4 per cent per annum with an Amount of Interest of U.S. \$101.18 per U.S. \$100,000 Note and U.S. \$1,011.81 per U.S. \$1,000,000 Note. The relevant Interest Payment Date will be 26th February, 1994.

Bankers Trust Company, London Agent Bank

LEGAL NOTICES

OFFICIAL NOTICE

The law has been reported to us of two London Metal Exchange - ALCAN Brand Aluminium Sows warrants, stored in warehouse Toledo Metals Terminals Inc., Toledo, as per below listed details:

Warrant No. 10333 - 36 SOWS - 25,352 Kgs.
Warrant No. 11141 - 35 SOWS - 24,590 Kgs.

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Prices for electricity generated by the power stations of the following companies are published for the period from 1st January to 31st December 1993. The prices are in pence per kilowatt hour (kWh) and are exclusive of VAT.

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Floating rate notes 1996

Notice is hereby given that the Rate of Interest under the Interest Payment Certificate has been fixed at 3.75% p.a. together with the 1% interest under the Bond Certificate, the total interest payable on the relevant Interest Payment Date May 31, 1994 in respect of U.S. \$250,000 nominal of the new Certificates will be U.S. \$6,936.46.

November 29, 1993
By: Citibank, N.A. Hong Kong, Agent Bank

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The Markets

THIS WEEK

Global Investor / Peter Martin

Why Japan isn't a bargain – yet



Just how much worse does the outlook for Japan have to get before the pessimism is overdone and the country starts to look like a bargain?

The economic statistics due out this week – unemployment, car registrations, maybe third-quarter GDP – will provide one answer. But there is also a simpler, more cynical answer: it depends on when the government starts buying. The ferocious bear squeeze of summer 1992, instigated to prop up the banking system and burn the fingers of westerners who believed the market had further to fall, shows just how rapidly the stock market can move when the government is determined to push it upwards. Then, the Nikkei index went from about 14,900 to nearly 19,000 in a matter of weeks.

In the past month, the Nikkei has fallen almost as fast as it rose then. It closed on Friday at 16,726.4, only 17 per cent higher than its low point of August 1992.

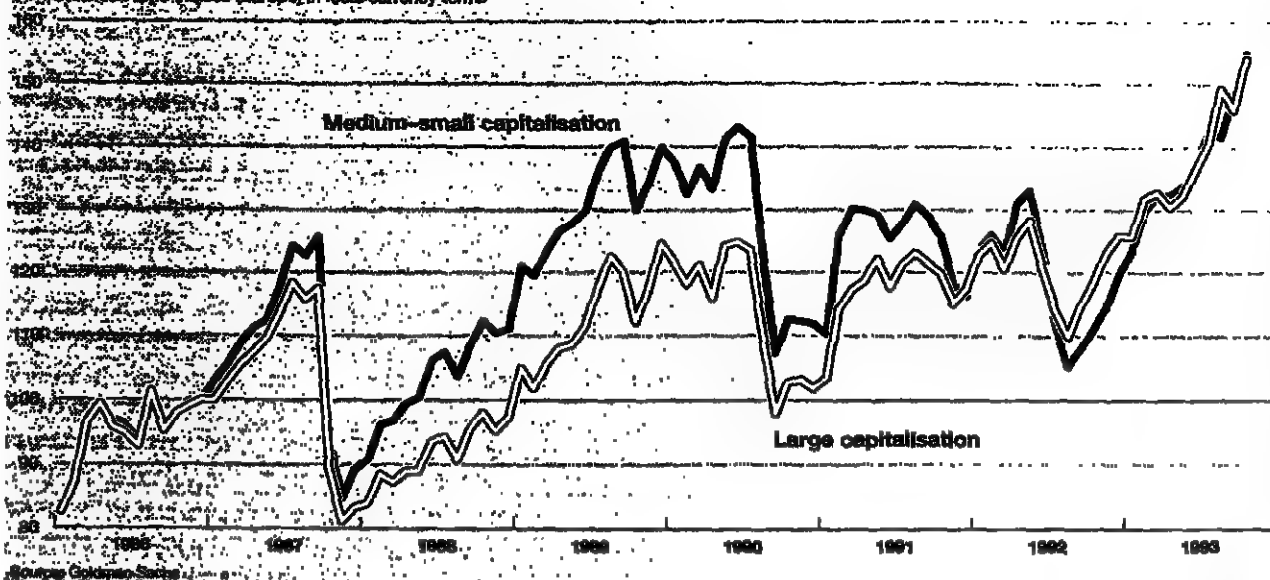
The speed of the decline owes something to the decision to replace the 225-share index with a more modern Nikkei 500, a move intended to make it harder to manipulate the index by dealing in the illiquid stocks that formed a high proportion of its contents. With no reason to hold these stocks, their price has plunged, driving the index down faster.

Still, that is only part of the story. The broader Topix index has also fallen – down 18 per cent in the past month – a reflection of the crisis of confidence that has engulfed the Japanese markets as it has become clear that the economy has taken a further downward turn.

The underlying economy is certainly suffering. JP Morgan is forecasting continuing con-

Large vs. not so large in Europe's stock markets

Percentage change in stock prices (Europe) in local currency terms



traction in the Japanese economy until midway through next year and no better than sluggish growth until at least the end of 1995. Corporate profits continue to slide. Falling share prices should make companies look cheap, but the drop in profits keeps price/earnings ratios at levels well above those in other developed countries. Through companies continue to stress the need for cost cuts, they have not yet embarked on wholesale restructuring.

From that point of view, Japan does not yet look like a bargain. Still, perceptions could change rapidly if the market started to move decisively upwards, under the stimulus of sustained government-led buying. So when will the government intervene? And will it work as well this time as it did in 1992?

There are two possible reasons why the government has held back from propping up the market. One is that it sees

no need to as yet though the Nikkei is within striking distance of its 1992 lows, the Topix index is still comfortably above them; it would need to fall another 22 per cent before it entered last year's danger zone. And last year's intervention had a specific purpose: to prop up the banks by preserving the value of their big holdings of securities. For most of this year, with their basic capital adequacy ratios safely met, fear about the banks has lessened. Perhaps a resurgence of concern about the banks, intensified by last week's poor results, will again produce a desire to prop them up.

The second possible reason for the government's failure to encourage stock market support may well be more significant: political paralysis. The new coalition government may not share the belief of its predecessors in intervention to prop up financial markets; or tensions between the bureaucrats and their new political

masters may be preventing decisive action.

If the policy log-jam breaks, government-inspired buying will probably be able to generate a new rally. As last year, this could be very substantial, especially if it coincides with further easing of monetary policy and a fresh commitment to stimulatory fiscal policy in 1994.

It will prove no more sustainable than last year's stock market recovery, however, until there are clear signs of a double Japanese restructuring: a shift of the economy towards deregulation and domestic consumption; and a shift on the part of companies towards profits rather than revenue growth.

One important imminent test of the first of those restructurings will be public reaction to the secret deal to open part of the rice market to imports, to be announced – so Japanese newspapers were saying over the weekend –

around December 10.

Trend

Two indicators that financial markets are starting to get above themselves: a brand-new Ferrari being delivered to an address in the City of London earlier this month; and the comment of a Swiss banker last week. "People are getting greedy," he said. The investment managers who work for him "think they are heroes, when all they are doing is following a trend."

Indicators

The Bundesbank meets on Thursday, accompanied by a clutch of economic indicators – German unemployment figures, manufacturing output, and new orders. The year ahead is stuffed with German elections: including local, regional, European parliament, presidential and federal parliamentary elections, there are 30

due in 1994. Add this much political uncertainty to the growing belief that 1994 could be a year of further economic contraction, and further cuts in German interest rates seem inevitable.

Traditionally, Germany only starts to emerge from recession when the yield curve is positively sloped – that is, when short-term interest rates are lower than long-term ones. Short-term rates are currently at 6½ per cent, and long-term rates are nearly half a point lower. So, no recovery in sight yet.

Will it take a recovery in the German economy to push smaller European stocks ahead of their larger counterparts? As the chart shows, the relative outperformance of smaller and medium-sized European shares ended at the beginning of 1992 and has yet to reappear. The chart is slightly misleading, however: second-tier British stocks have outperformed their blue-chip rivals, an effect masked by the relative underperformance of smaller companies on the continent. The German industrial production and manufacturing output numbers, due out towards the end of the week, will give an indication of how Germany's export-oriented manufacturing heartland is doing. Though the biggest German companies are making heavy weather of their restructuring, their smaller competitors do not face the same political scrutiny and have far less opportunity to delay the moment of decision. If second-tier German businesses are indeed responding urgently to the economic pressures they face, their share prices will in time start to respond.

Evidence

From an international investor's viewpoint, the contents of Kenneth Clarke's UK Budget this week are probably of less importance than the growing evidence that the Bank of

Total return in local currency to 25/11/93

	US	Japan	% change over period	France	Italy	UK
Cash						
Week	0.06	0.05	0.12	0.13	0.17	0.11
Month	0.27	0.21	0.55	0.57	0.73	0.49
Year	4.00	3.59	7.69	8.94	13.44	6.69
Bonds 3-5 year						
Week	-0.18	0.87	0.08	-0.20	-1.10	-0.10
Month	-0.99	1.45	1.01	0.32	-1.62	0.73
Year	9.75	10.82	12.94	16.73	24.74	11.69
Bonds 7-10 year						
Week	-0.86	0.42	-0.27	-0.29	-2.30	0.59
Month	-1.93	1.57	0.43	-0.37	-3.06	0.78
Year	13.78	13.02	16.51	22.23	32.38	17.41
Equities						
Week	-0.3	-5.1	-1.8	-1.2	-2.0	-0.6
Month	-0.3	-11.1	-1.1	-3.6	-10.3	-2.5
Year	10.2	16.5	37.1	30.6	32.5	21.3

Best performing stocks from FT-A World Indices in local currency to 25/11/93

	Close	% change	Week	Month	Year
Bandar Raya Dev. (Mal)	3.64	40.0	88.5	154.5	n.a.
Modena 'A' (Mex)	18.10	25.8	27.2	n.a.	n.a.
Multi-Purpose Hids (Mal)	6.35	21.0	15.5	137.8	n.a.
Kelamas Ind (Mal)	10.40	20.9	59.6	136.4	n.a.
Chinese Estates (HK)	6.40	19.4	20.8	132.4	n.a.
US Shoes (USA)	14.88	19.2	34.1	15.7	n.a.
Daishowa Paper (Jap)	1170.00	17.0	-33.1	-31.6	n.a.
Far East Livingstone (Sin)	7.20	14.3	4.3	159.0	n.a.
Tasman Properties (NZ)	0.08	12.5	12.5	-10.0	n.a.
Coca-Cola Bev. (Can)	5.75	12.2	30.7	71.6	n.a.

Sources: Cash & Bonds - Lehman Brothers. The FT-World Indices are jointly owned by The Financial Times Limited, Goldman Sachs & Co., and NatWest Securities Limited.

England is acquiring a flavour of autonomy. A truly independent central bank becomes so because of the attitudes and expectations of its leaders, the political classes and the electorate, not because of the nominal powers entrusted to it by law. It is not clear what the electorate thinks, but the new team at the Bank obviously believes independence is a state of mind – and the politicians are willing to give them some room to exercise it.

Deficit

A country with a truly independent central bank – Switzerland – is at last about to see a return to its traditional low inflation. Though Swiss inflation was still around 3½ per cent in October, the November

figure should drop to around 2½ per cent and, says Hans Kaufman of Bank Julius Bär in Zurich, it will drop below 1½ per cent next year.

The growing government deficit has created a peculiar situation: the government bond issue is yielding 4.14 per cent, while the average yield on issues from private-sector Swiss corporations is only 4.12 per cent.

That unfavourable spread helps explain the need for Switzerland's new VAT, approved by the voters yesterday. The shift from a sales tax will help exporters, such as the pharmaceuticals and engineering companies, and hurt service businesses, including the banks, which will now have to charge VAT on their portfolio management services.

Economics Notebook / Peter Norman

Clarke's first Budget looms out of statistical fog



The one near certainty about tomorrow's Budget is that Kenneth Clarke will put on a confident performance. The chancellor is an effective parliamentarian who relishes his appearances at the despatch box.

It is equally certain that his confidence will be based on statistics which in some cases are of doubtful reliability and in others are simply uncounted.

Official figures suggest that Britain is experiencing an unusually steady if unspectacular recovery. But key numbers on trade, industrial production and national output could be concealing a different picture.

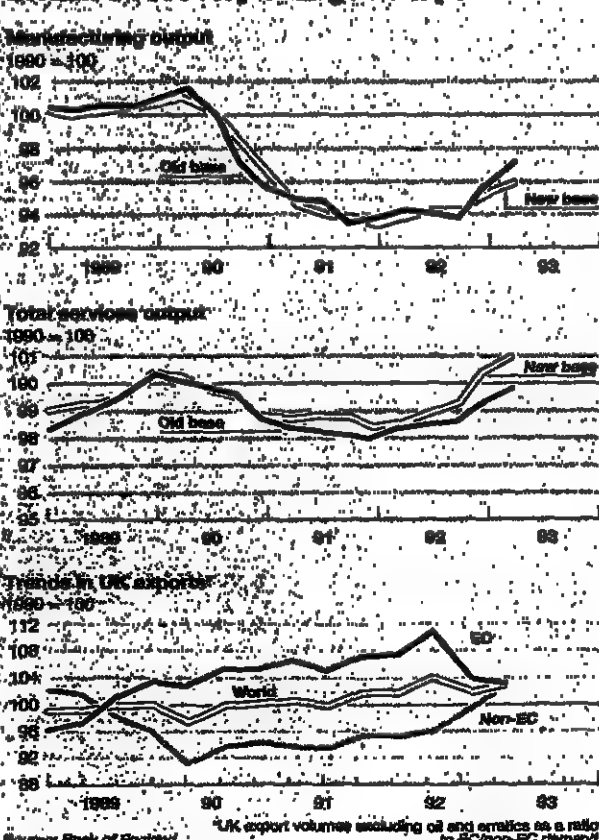
This year has been especially difficult because the introduction of the European single market has turned the figures on visible trade from one of the most to the about least reliable indicator.

In October, for example, the Central Statistical Office judged that Britain's visible trade deficit had been widening for some time. A month later, its view was that the trend had been narrowing.

However, the chancellor also has problems knowing what is happening at home. The accompanying graphs from this month's Bank of England bulletin show that the official perception of the shape of Britain's recovery has changed substantially since Mr Clarke began Budget preparations. Britain appeared in the summer to be having an ideal recovery, led by strong growth in manufacturing output that held out hopes of a greater share of national production going into exports and investment. The recovery now seems more akin to previous British upturns based on consumer demand and growth in services.

According to the Bank, manufacturing output grew in real terms by about 1.5 per cent in the first half of this year compared with an earlier estimate of 2.7 per cent. Meanwhile service sector output, which accounts for 63 per cent of gross domestic product, is back above its recent peak of early 1990. Earlier statistics

Britain's recovery changes shape



Sources: Bank of England. UK export volume including oil and services on a real to 1989=100 demand.

suggested it was half a per cent below.

The changing shape of the recovery partly reflects changes in the price deflators used to calculate the volume growth of exports and output. Statisticians, when they calculate the important volume indices that guide our understanding of the way an economy is developing, do not count every unit of output. Instead they take figures for the value of industrial production, retail sales and gross domestic product and deflate them by what they believe to be the right prices.

The Bank believes the export price figures may have been overestimated. The latest figures, showing an average 10 per cent year-on-year jump in export prices to world markets and a 12 per cent rise in the light of past experience of sterling devaluations when export prices rose by only about half the extent of the

pound's depreciation. If the Bank is right, the bottom graph becomes less puzzling. It shows that Britain's exports as a share of domestic demand in the European Union have fallen sharply since the beginning of this year.

This is difficult to explain, as exporters seem to be building up market share outside the EU and still enjoy some improvement in price competitiveness following sterling's exit from the European exchange rate mechanism in September 1992.

If export prices have risen less than the CBO figures suggest, manufacturing output and gross domestic product will have been higher than officially recorded.

There are also some doubts about domestic prices of manufactured goods. The Confederation of British Industry says official figures exaggerate the rise in manufactured goods prices for the home market because they fail to reflect dis-

counting by factories.

Recent UK third quarter figures, showing falling unemployment, rising productivity and stagnant manufacturing output, are difficult to reconcile and could lead support to the idea that output is being under-recorded.

One explanation of the relatively feeble growth of UK manufacturing output in recent years may be subcontracting by companies of activities that are not central to their main line of business. The provision of a factory's meals by outside caterers rather than workshop canteens would, for example, lead to a fall in recorded industrial production and an increase in UK service sector output.

Such a trend may be part of a bigger problem of official statistics failing to reflect the growth and complexity of the service sector that is affecting the industrialised economies in general. It has been highlighted in a new book, "Statistics for the 21st Century", co-authored by Mr Joseph Duncan, the chief economist and statistician of Dun & Bradstreet, the US business information group.

Mr Duncan points out that the basic data collected to measure economic and social progress have remained essentially unchanged in spite of dramatic changes in business practices and the international economy in recent years.

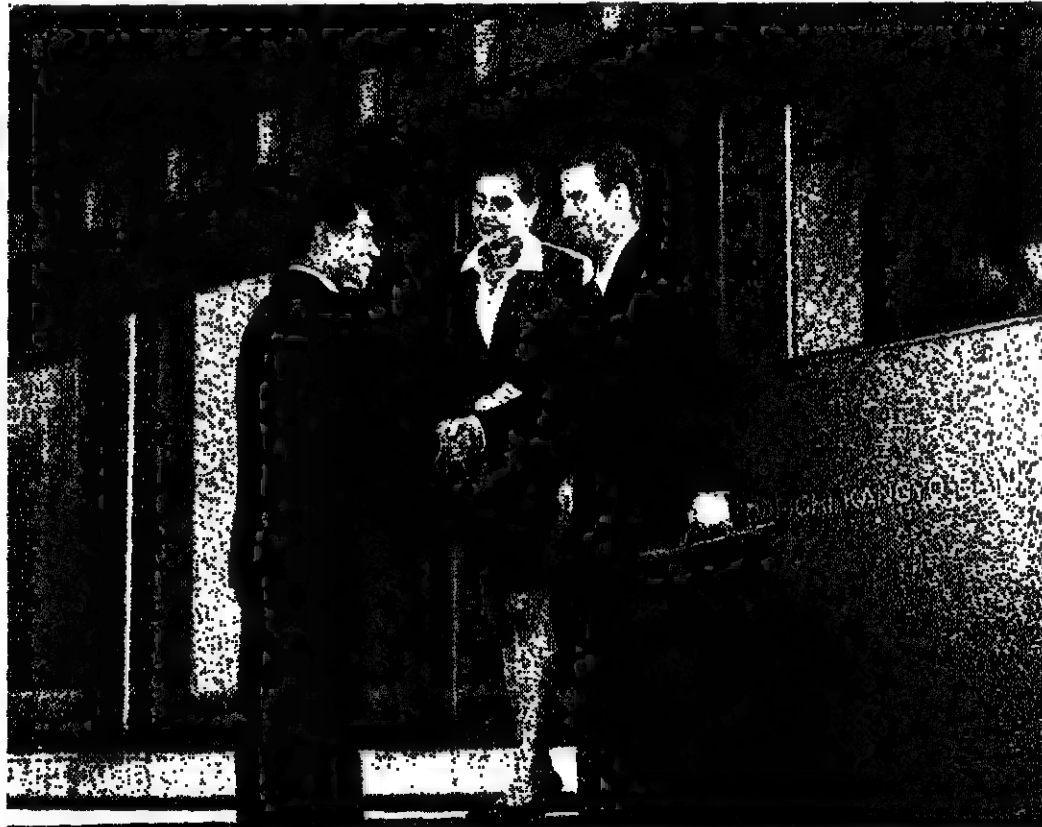
"Nobody would try to launch today's space shuttle using a set of instruments developed for the old DC-3 aircraft," he says. Yet he contends that governments, businesses and individuals are measuring and managing the economy in this way.

The doubts surrounding UK statistics this year may have a silver lining for Mr Clarke: there is a possibility that Britain has been growing at a faster rate than official indicators suggest.

But no-one can be content if Britain and other industrial countries are basing economic decisions of importance for the next century on statistical methods developed at the time of the DC-3.

From Dun & Bradstreet, Economic Analysis Dept, PO Box 3538, New York, NY 10163-3538, 314.55.

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COMPANIES AND FINANCE

Paribas plans Axime bid after lifting stake to 50%

By Alice Rawsthorn in Paris

Paribas, the prominent French banking group, plans to extend its portfolio of industrial investments by taking control of Axime, an information services company.

On Friday, Paribas bought a 13.2 per cent stake in Axime for FF98.7m (\$12.7m) from a group of institutional investors thereby raising its holding to 50.4 per cent. It announced plans to make an offer for the remaining shares in the company, apart from the 26 per cent stake held by Compagnie Générale des Eaux, the utilities group.

Générale des Eaux plans to hold on to its Axime stake. Paribas has offered FF230 a share for the remaining equity which is divided between private and institutional investors. Axime is valued at FF745m on the offer price.

Paribas, which has interests in the information services field through the SEMA Group, said the offer for Axime formed part of its policy of becoming the controlling shareholder in "companies that we consider have high growth potential".

Paribas has in recent years pursued its industrial portfolio by ceding some of its peripheral minority interests.

Axime, which operates a payment system for tele-marketing and direct marketing services as well as providing general information services, has had a difficult time in recent years as a result of the pressures on the French market.

However, the company, which employs 2,400 people, is recovering after rationalising and restructuring its interests. It recently announced that it returned to the red with a net profit of FF65m, on sales of FF1.9bn, in the 12 months to June 30 after making a net loss of FF83m in the previous year.

Ilva to sell holding in steel tubes business

By Haig Simonian in Milan

Ilva, the Italian state-owned steel group which is being liquidated as part of a large restructuring, is to sell its 86.4 per cent stake in Dalmine, the world's third-biggest manufacturer of seamless steel tubes.

Barclays de Zoete Wadd, the securities arm of Barclays Bank, has been given the mandate to find a buyer as part of the urgent need to raise cash for Ilva and privatise its operations.

Demonstrating that meaningful parts of the Ilva group are being privatised will be a significant boost to the arguments being used by Italian negotiators in their battle of wills with the European Commission in Brussels over state aid and capacity cuts.

Dalmine, which is based near the north Italian city of Bergamo, is listed on the stock market and profitable. Net group earnings last year amounted to L5.6bn (\$3.4m) on sales of L1,016bn.

The company, which trails Mannesmann of Germany and Sumitomo of Japan in seamless tubes, last year delivered 748,000 tonnes of steel.

In recent months, Ilva has been buying out some of the minority partners in Dalmine, ostensibly to prepare for the sale of a large stake. Bankers have hesitated to put a value to the holding in view of the current crisis in the European steel industry.

Ilva, which is formally in liquidation, is being split into two companies. The first, specialising in flat products, will comprise the group's big Taranto integrated steelworks and the Novi Ligure plant, while the second will be based on the Terni special steels unit.

Ilva lost L3,308bn last year on group sales of L10,067bn. The company, which is planning to shed about 11,500 jobs, had net debts of L7,500bn at the end of June.

Lebanon offers a part in its future

The country has turned to capital markets, writes James Whittington

Lebanon's struggle for self-renewal after 17 years of devastating civil war marks a new approach to the financing of development in the Middle East.

Gone are the days when Lebanon's pressing needs to rebuild its infrastructure could be achieved by funds from generous oil-producing states in the Arab world and sympathetic Western countries.

The industrialised world is jittery about recession, and the big Gulf states are persistently examining huge budget deficits as oil prices continue to fall.

Donor money is plainly in short supply. As a result, the Lebanese government has been forced to seek alternatives to finance its reconstruction programme, priced at \$14bn in real terms over 10 years.

It is asking private investors to buy a stake in Lebanon's future. On November 1, Solidere, a \$1.5bn property company set up to rebuild the centre of Beirut, launched a \$650m Arab equity offering, one of the biggest share issues in the region.

A few weeks later, the government announced plans to raise \$300m by issuing Eurobonds to develop the mainly Shiite southern suburbs of Beirut, and a road network.

Mr Riad Salameh, Lebanon's new central bank governor, said he is confident the Euro-

bonds will be well received when they are issued in "the next few weeks". He expects Lebanon's low foreign debt of around \$600m, or 10.5 per cent of GNP, and the government's "credibility" to ensure the issue's success.

Lebanon has not defaulted on any international loans since the start of the civil war in 1975. In Mr Rafik Hariri, it has a prime minister with a proven track record in business and one of the strongest financial teams in the region.

The country also has gold reserves worth around \$3.5bn, although Lebanese law forbids the government from either selling or pledging the asset.

Mr Salameh explained that no manager had yet been appointed to arrange the offering, but Merrill Lynch, the US securities house, and Banque Paribas, the French bank, have both been approached. He said the bonds were likely to be priced to yield between 350 and 400 basis points over US treasuries.

The governor, who joined the central bank in August from his post as vice-president of Merrill Lynch in Paris, said that under the present climate of international belt-tightening, Lebanon will have to rely on capital markets and equities to finance much of its rehabilitation.

"I think that if the Eurobond issue is successful, then it will be one of the main ways to raise capital for Lebanon. We might have some syndicated loans but would prefer to go to capital markets," he said.

The launch of shares in Solidere appears to have met a strong response. Mr Abdel-Hafiz Mansour, deputy general manager of the company, expects the offer to be oversubscribed.

Existing land and property owners of the 165 acre area in the centre of Beirut earmarked for development will be given priority in the allocation of shares. They will be followed in pecking order by Lebanese residents, government institutions, Lebanese expatriates living abroad, and citizens of Arab states who, it is expected, will include many prominent Saudis.

A maximum 10 per cent individual stake will ensure no single shareholder can take over control of the company, and the subscription remains open until January 10. The cash raised will be used to finance the first phase of redevelopment of what used to be Beirut's bustling commercial centre.

Mr Salameh explained Lebanon's reconstruction programme - named Horizon 2000 - would be 70 per cent financed by the private sector and 20 per cent

by foreign aid and loans.

By his estimates, Lebanon will have to borrow \$2.5bn in external finance over the 10-year period "which is reasonable considering GNP [put at \$7.5bn for 1993 by the central bank] and the economic expansion planned for the next five years," he said. The rest will come from government revenues and internal borrowing.

Donor commitments to date do not exceed \$1.4bn, including \$175m from the World Bank. A Bank-sponsored consultative group meeting planned for December is expected to result in more aid.

However, Lebanese officials admit that since the historic agreement signed between the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel in September, available funds for Middle East development are likely to be pledged to the occupied territories rather than war-torn Lebanon.

In the light of this, Mr Hariri's big gamble is that once the reconstruction ball starts rolling, with finance raised by capital markets and donor countries, then Lebanese expatriates holding overseas assets of between \$30bn and \$40bn will keep up the momentum through investment and remittances.

In this way, it is likely that market forces will determine the future of Lebanon.

Italian banks agree takeover

By Haig Simonian

Banca Popolare di Verona, a big north Italian regional bank, has reached agreement to take a controlling interest in Banco San Geminiano e San Prospero, a similar-sized rival, for about L1,040bn (\$600m).

The accord, reached late on Thursday, ends Italy's first hostile bank takeover bid and comes at a time of unprecedented ferment among regional banks.

Last week, Deutsche Bank agreed to buy Banca Popolare di Lecco, a 100-branch regional bank located just north of

Milan, at an estimated total cost of L840bn. Separately, the Parma savings bank, which has expanded through a series of local mergers, is in talks to buy Credito Commerciale, another Milan-based regional institution.

The San Geminiano deal, in which the bank called in Schroders of the UK as its adviser, was a cliffhanger until the last minute, with two other potential suitors waiting in the wings. However, San Geminiano's board eventually decided to accept a greatly improved offer from the Veroneses after a tough contest.

Banca Popolare di Verona will now buy an estimated 60-65 per cent of Banco San Geminiano, rather than the 47 per cent originally planned.

The increase stems from a commitment to buy all the stock tendered by shareholders owning less than 1,000 shares, rather than a partial purchase.

That commitment, and an earlier decision to raise the offer price to L200,000 a share from L150,000, effectively clinched the deal, along with guarantees on boardroom representation for San Geminiano.

Chinese power plant project

Sembawang Resources, part of the Singapore government-controlled Sembawang group of companies, has signed an agreement with companies in China to develop a \$61.9bn (US\$1.2bn) power plant in Ningbo, a coastal city in Zhejiang province, writes Kieran Cooke.

Under the deal, Sembawang will organise international capital in the form of both equity and loans, to develop the 2,400MW coal-fired plant at Ying Long Shan, about 40km south-east of Ningbo.

Berjaya in Hyundai deal

By Kieran Cooke in Kuala Lumpur

Berjaya, one of Malaysia's fastest expanding conglomerates, has signed an agreement with the Hyundai Motor of South Korea to produce commercial vehicles for Malaysia's domestic market and for export.

The joint venture company, described as a Malaysian national commercial vehicle project, will assemble, distribute and service right-hand versions of Hyundai's lightweight trucks.

The partners say they expect to produce 10,000 light trucks a year in Malaysia, beginning in 1996.

Dr Mahathir Mohamed, the Malaysian prime minister who was present at a signing ceremony at the weekend, called on South Korean companies to invest more in Malaysia.

Berjaya, which is controlled by Malaysian Chinese entrepreneur Mr Vincent Tan, has a 20 per cent stake in the project while an affiliated company will hold a similar stake.

Henkel hit by costs of early retirement plan

By Ariane Genillard in Bonn

Pre-tax profits at Henkel, the German chemicals, cosmetics and cleaning products group, fell by 16 per cent to DM423m (\$251.2m) in the first nine months of the year.

Mr Hans Dietrich Winkaus, chief executive, said the decline was partly due to extraordinary expenses to pay for the early retirement of workers in 1993 and 1994. The company plans to cut 1,300 jobs by the end of 1994, of which 1,000 will be in Germany.

Sales for the period fell 2 per cent to DM10.5bn. The decline was mostly the result of currency fluctuations, Mr Winkaus said. Without this, sales would have improved by 0.4 per cent for the nine months.

The chief executive said he expected sales for the whole year to show a 2 per cent decline, despite earlier statements this year predicting turnover would remain constant.

Depressed demand caused sales for period to drop 8 per cent in Europe.

Bank of Nova Scotia raises dividend by 6%

By Bernard Simon in Toronto

Bank of Nova Scotia has raised its quarterly dividend after posting a 6 per cent rise in fiscal 1994 earnings.

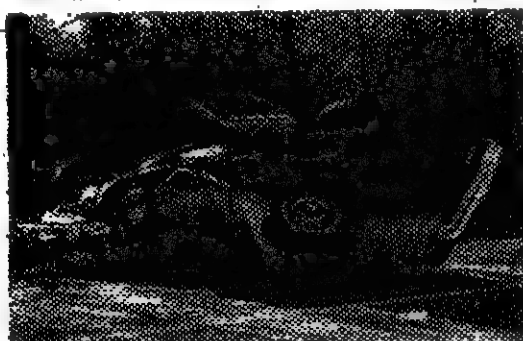
The bank, Canada's fourth-biggest, attributed the higher earnings to a combination of strong investment banking revenues, a 10 per cent growth in assets, an improved developing world loan portfolio, and tight cost controls.

Net earnings advanced to C\$714m (US\$653.5m), equal to C\$2.98 per common share, in

the year to October 31, from C\$678m, or C\$2.84 a share, a year earlier. A larger number of shares outstanding pushed the return on equity down to 14.1 per cent from 15.7 per cent.

The quarterly dividend has been raised from 28 to 29 cents a share.

Loan-loss provisions rose to C\$465m from C\$448m. The latest figure includes a C\$300m reversal of developing world loan provisions, of which half was re-allocated to specific provisions for other borrowers.



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	Stocks	Closing	Change		Stocks	Closing
	Traded	Prices	on Day		Traded	Prices
Nippon Steel	4.5m	910	-9	Daichi Kangyo BK	2.5m	2,030
Hitachi	3.5m	701	-20	NIKKO	2.7m	230
Sakura Bank	3.1m	1,420	-130	Sankyo M&I Ind	2.7m	732
Huachi Cos.	2.5m	492	-15	Ind Bank Japan	2.7m	2,050
Bank of Tokyo	2.5m	1,280	-180		2.5m	2,000

US INDICES

— Set New 20 : Taiwan Weighted Price 4247.09, Korea Comp Cr 548.47; Base values of all indices are 100 except: Australia All Ordinary and Mining - 500; Austria Trading, BEL20, HEX Gen., MIS Gen., CAC40, Euro Top-100, ISOC Overall; Toronto Comp. Metals & Minerals and DAX - all 1,000; JSE Gold - 255.7, JSE Top Industrials - 264.3, NYSE All Common - 50 and Standard and Poor's - 10. 95 Montreal ϕ Toronto (C) Closed. RJ Uruguay ϕ Subject to official recalculation.

* Correction. * Calculated as 15.00 GMF. † Excluding bonds. ‡ Industries, plus Utilities, Financial and Transportation.
 § The DJ Ind. Index theoretical day's highs and lows are the averages of the highest and lowest prices reached during the day by each stock; whereas the actual day's highs and lows (supplied by Telekurs) represent the highest and lowest values that the index has reached during the day. (The figures in brackets are previous day's).

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that the managers will normally deal on the price set on the most recent contract. The prices shown are the latest available before

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Other explanatory notes are contained in the last column of the FT Managed Funds Service.

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$\frac{d}{dt} \left(\frac{1}{\rho} \right) = - \frac{1}{\rho^2} \frac{d\rho}{dt}$

Royal Laidlaw, Delaware	146.5	148.2	143.7	0.26	142.2	143.8	145.8	147.8
American Growth	146.5	148.2	143.7	0.26	142.2	143.8	145.8	147.8
European Growth	146.5	148.2	143.7	0.26	142.2	143.8	145.8	147.8
Forrest Growth	146.5	148.2	143.7	0.26	142.2	143.8	145.8	147.8

Agropur Canada	138.8	138.80	147.8	0.00	138.8
Special Sale	183.6	183.6	196.3	1.37	183.6
UK Canada	71.86	71.86	78.75	1.89	71.86
Yellow Canada	222.7	222.50	237.4	0.70	222.5

St James's Place MT Group Ltd (2008)			
1st St Vincent St, Glasgow G2 6LS	04-707 9000		
Per Fund Inc.	178.1	173.1	182.2
Per Fund Dec	172.1	161.2	161.8
	0.17	0.17	0.17

Gr East Prod Acc-1976-7	259.0	259.0	317.4	0.17	0.0000	Accountants	142.2	143.0	152.3	0.20	0.0000
Gr East Prod Acc-1976-7	492.5	492.5	499.4	0.17	0.0000	Insurance	449.2	449.2	477.3	1.71	0.0000
Gr East Prod Acc-1976-7	115.0	115.0	122.8	0.23	0.0000	Insurance United	487.1	487.1	529.3	1.15	0.0000
Gr East Prod Acc-1976-7	115.0	115.0	122.8	0.23	0.0000	Japan	145.3	145.3	167.2	0.20	0.0000

Western Air Inc. (198-T)	504.6	504.6	522.3	0.08	4810	Procon Unit	140.5	140.2	150.5	-
International Air (198-T)	417.6	417.6	442.1	0.06	3951	Low Pacific	377.9	376.8	404.3	0.06
High Air & Int'l Inc.	312.1	312.1	338.3	0.47	4900	Procon Unit	268.0	267.8	273.7	0.06
Mid Air & Int'l Inc.	375.8	375.8	387.5	0.47	4910	International Inc.	211.2	212.1	225.8	1.00

Low Income Hgt	169.8	170.8	171.8	172.8
Progressive Acc	217.6	223.2	228.8	234.4
High Income Hgt	173.8	183.2	192.6	202.0
High Income Acc	139.4	147.8	156.2	164.6

City Place Hse, 65 Beaufort St, BCYF, BC 071	330	6572
King's American Book Co.	63.23	63.21
King's American Book Co.	76.23	77.81

Japan Airlines Corp.	100.0	118.4	117.4	1.25	100.0	118.4	117.4	1.25
Japan Transocean Corp.	82.85	83.08	87.02	1.80	82.85	83.08	87.02	1.80
Japan Global Inc.	87.38	81.36	85.38	6.00	87.38	81.36	85.38	6.00
Japan Global Inc.	83.18	83.78	87.85	0.50	83.18	83.78	87.85	0.50
Japan Global Inc.	83.18	83.78	87.85	0.50	83.18	83.78	87.85	0.50

Japan	95.86	95.78	95.90	0.08
UK	97.71	97.80	97.26	-0.54
UK (GDP)	94.87	95.75	96.30	0.55

[illegible][illegible]

Overhead	\$5	125.2	129.2	131.1	8.80	417	38.29	38.88	42.36	2.98
Eastern Discount	5 1/2	119.7	122.5	128.7	-	418	37.84	37.86	46.53	2.97
Energy Plus	5 1/2	117.6	117.9	129.1	8.37	419	32.85	33.88	33.79	8.35

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Continued on next page

NYSE COMPOSITE PRICES

Stock	Chg	High	Low	Open	Close	Volume
IBM	1.00	124.00	123.00	123.00	124.00	1,200,000
Microsoft	0.25	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	800,000
Apple	0.10	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	600,000
Oracle	0.15	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	400,000
Sun	0.20	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	300,000
HP	0.10	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	200,000
Motorola	0.15	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	100,000
Intel	0.20	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	100,000
IBM	1.00	124.00	123.00	123.00	124.00	1,200,000
Microsoft	0.25	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	800,000
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Oracle	0.15	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	400,000
Sun	0.20	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	300,000
HP	0.10	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	200,000
Motorola	0.15	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	100,000
Intel	0.20	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	100,000

AMEX COMPOSITE PRICES

Stock	Chg	High	Low	Open	Close	Volume
IBM	1.00	124.00	123.00	123.00	124.00	1,200,000
Microsoft	0.25	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	800,000
Apple	0.10	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	600,000
Oracle	0.15	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	400,000
Sun	0.20	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	300,000
HP	0.10	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	200,000
Motorola	0.15	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	100,000
Intel	0.20	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	100,000

NASDAQ NATIONAL MARKET

Stock	Chg	High	Low	Open	Close	Volume
IBM	1.00	124.00	123.00	123.00	124.00	1,200,000
Microsoft	0.25	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	800,000
Apple	0.10	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	600,000
Oracle	0.15	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	400,000
Sun	0.20	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	300,000
HP	0.10	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	200,000
Motorola	0.15	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	100,000
Intel	0.20	100.00	99.00	99.00	100.00	100,000

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FINANCIAL TIMES
Perrier bottle ends with something for everyone

FT GUIDE TO THE WEEK

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MONDAY

Hosokawa rides high



Debate on the government's plans to reform Japan's scandal-prone electoral system begins in the upper house of parliament, having passed the lower house on November 18. The position of prime minister Morihiro Hosokawa (above) has been strengthened by an opinion poll last week which gave his cabinet a 73.5 per cent approval rating.

Milk shake-up: The UK government's consultation period on plans for liberalising the milk market ends, when minister of agriculture Gifford Shepherd must weigh up proposals by the Milk Marketing Board to turn itself into a voluntary farmers' co-operative called Milk Marque. The plan has been attacked by dairy companies which think it will restrict competition and mean higher prices for consumers.

Today is also the start of the Smithfield agricultural show at London's Earls Court exhibition centre.

Gatté delegations: From the 116 nations engaged in the Uruguay round in Geneva begin "evaluation" of all market access offers for goods and services on the table.

Loans to Iraq: Christopher Drogoul, former Atlanta branch manager for Banca Nazionale del Lavoro, faces sentencing in Atlanta on 70 counts of conspiracy, mail fraud and wire fraud in connection with the bank's illegal loans to Iraq.

Russia's first deputy prime minister Yegor Gaidar meets miners' leaders to try to negotiate a solution to a strike threat from Wednesday.

Moldova, a former republic of the Soviet Union, is slated to introduce its own currency, the Leu.

Feruzzi Finanziaria, the holding company for Italy's second largest private company, and Montedison, its main industrial subsidiary, are due to hold board meetings in advance of Tuesday and Wednesday's shareholders' meetings in order to assess banks' response to the group's ambitious multibillion lira rescue plan - one of the biggest corporate restructurings Europe has seen.

Rousseau to go: Tonight Christie's in London auctions the most important painting by the eccentric French post-impressionist artist Henri Rousseau to appear at auction in 20 years. It is a portrait of the dealer Joseph Brummer and is estimated at £2m.

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TUESDAY

Mr Clarke gives his Budget

In the UK Budget, attention will be focused on how Kenneth Clarke, the chancellor, rises to the challenge of reducing the projected £50bn public sector deficit. He has indicated that he intends to stimulate industry and that tax rises will be targeted at consumers rather than business.

CSCE meetings: Foreign ministers from the 52 states of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) meet in Rome to review peace-keeping efforts and the monitoring of actual and potential conflicts from Bosnia to Tajikistan. High on the agenda will be a discussion of Moscow's attempt to gain western moral and financial backing for Russia's controversial "peace-keeping" operations beyond its southern borders.

Franco-German summit: The regular twice-yearly Franco-German talks take place in Bonn (to Dec 1). French president François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl, the German chancellor (pictured below), are expected to discuss Gatté, the next European summit and the outlook for the EU after Maastricht. Also present will be French prime minister Edouard Balladur, various of his ministers, and their German counterparts.



Glaxo, The largest pharmaceuticals group in Europe, and the world's biggest spender on drugs R&D, is to brief analysts on details of its drugs under development. The company will reveal for the first time since December 1991 how it has been spending its R&D budget, some \$1.15bn this year. Details of the group's products and international operations will also be given.

Feruzzi Finanziaria holds an extraordinary general meeting to discuss the £2.92bn (\$1.7bn) recapitalisation and creditors' debt-for-equity conversion swap.

How low can they go? The first UK Costco store opens at Thurrock, Essex. The US warehouse club operator is bound to intensify the price war among food retailers.

1

WEDNESDAY

UN sanctions against Libya

Further UN sanctions against Libya are due to take effect after a grace period. They come in the face of the continued failure of Tripoli to hand over the two agents suspected of planting the bomb that destroyed a Pan-Am jumbo jet over the Scottish town of Lockerbie in 1988.

Libyan assets abroad will be frozen, with the exception of those which come from the sale of oil, gas and farm produce. There will be an embargo on Libyan imports of technology, with the exception of spare parts for the oil and gas industry. The US and UK had called for tougher measures; their mildness is due to the insistence of continental European countries.

United Airlines disputes: The large US carrier is due to resume talks with unions representing its pilots and machinists. The company's restructuring plan, intended to improve profitability, involves staff lay-offs and a sale of assets which its unions oppose. A fortnight ago, United rejected a union offer to acquire 60 per cent of the company in return for staffing concessions.

Trade talks: Mickey Kantor, the US trade representative, is expected to begin critical talks in Brussels with Leon Brittan, EU trade commissioner. They are under mounting pressure to complete an agreement on cutting tariffs on manufactured goods and farm products.

Agreement is an essential precondition for successful conclusion of the Uruguay round by the December 15 deadline.

Russian coal miners in Vorkuta, the main coal mining area in the arctic circle, are threatening to strike and could be supported by miners in Siberia. The political implications of the strike could be as important as their industrial consequences. The miners played a vital role in bringing down the Communists in 1989. A strike against President Boris Yeltsin's reform programme could deal it a heavy blow.

Montedison holds an extraordinary shareholders' meeting to discuss the £5.17bn (\$3bn) recapitalisation and creditors' debt-for-equity conversion swap.

Japan: The Bonen-kai (forget the year) season of corporate cocktail parties begins and lasts all month. Proceedings are expected to be muted this year in view of the recession, which saw the Nikkei decline 6.8 per cent last week.

2

THURSDAY

Bundesbank council meets

The policy-making body of the German central bank gathers for the last-but-one session this year. Following last week's fall in inflation, many market operators are expecting another 50 basis-point cut in the official discount and Lombard rates.

Foreign ministers' slogs: Nato foreign ministers, hot-foot from the CSCE meeting in Rome, fly to Brussels for a meeting at Nato headquarters. In the evening, 12 of them travel across town for an all-night European Union session on the Gatté Uruguay Round world trade talks, which has been called by France.

The French have said a "pre-agreement" between the EU and the US must be on the table for examination at this meeting, otherwise the December 15 deadline cannot be met.

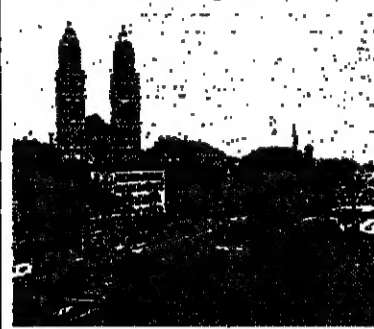
On Friday, the 12 foreign ministers change hats again and return to Nato headquarters for a meeting with foreign ministers from eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Spanish labour unrest: Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez is due to meet union leaders and employers' representatives in a bid to ease mounting industrial tension and avert a possible one-day general strike. Unions object to the government's plans to reduce dismissal costs and remove rigidities from domestic labour legislation.

Royal Doulton: Shares in the fine-china manufacturer which is being demerged from Pearson, the media conglomerate and owner of the Financial Times, are expected to begin trading at between 150p and 200p. Pearson's existing shareholders are being offered one Royal Doulton share for every 10 held in the media parent.

In the salerooms: The veteran car Genevieve, a four-seater 12hp Darracq, made famous in the 1933 film of the same name, is to be auctioned by Brooks of London. The price may top £200,000.

FT Traveller, Zürich: A guide to the Swiss financial capital.



In London on Tuesday, Kenneth Clarke, the UK chancellor, presents his first Budget

3

FRIDAY

Ulster peace initiative

UK prime minister John Major and Ireland's premier Albert Reynolds are scheduled to hold a summit in Dublin, intended to add momentum to the latest peace effort in Northern Ireland.

However, it is uncertain whether the meeting will take place as planned or be postponed.

Gatté Negotiators in Geneva will debate the US-EU market access package which they hope will have been unveiled in Brussels two days earlier. A full assessment of the impact of the round on developing countries should also be tabled.

Japanese economy: The world's second biggest economy is struggling with its worst recession for 50 years. Today, the OECD releases an economic report on Japan and the FT publishes a survey of Japanese industry.

4-5

WEEKEND

Electors of Brandenburg

Sunday's local government elections in this eastern German state should indicate how far voters are disillusioned with mainstream political parties ahead of next year's 19 polls.

Jacques Delors, EU president, will try at a special meeting of finance ministers on Sunday to get his plan for tackling unemployment adopted.

Venezuelan elections: Opinion polls show 77-year-old former president Rafael Caldera, ahead of 17 rivals in the presidential contest on Sunday. There are also congressional and 22 state elections.

Speakeasy: From Saturday, the UK's BT telephone company is cutting the price of calls anywhere in the country to 10p for 3 minutes.

Compiled by Patrick Stiles.
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ECONOMIC DIARY

Statistics to be released this week

Country	Economic Statistic	Day Released	Previous Actual	Median Forecast
UK	Nov M0 (month on month)	Mon 29	0.4%	0.4%
	Nov M0 (year on year)	Mon 29	5.4%	5%
	Nov official reserves	Thurs 2	up \$32m	up \$50m
US	Nov Consumer Confidence	Tues 30	59.4	62
	Q3 GDP Preliminary	Wed 1	2.8%	2.9%
	Nov NAPM Index	Wed 1	53.8%	54.5%
	Initial claims - w/e 27 Nov	Thurs 2	393,000	-
	Nov non-farm payrolls	Frid 3	up 177,000	up 175,000
Japan	Nov manufacturing payrolls	Frid 3	up 12,000	up 15,000
	Nov unemployment rate	Fri 3	6.8%	6.7%
	Oct housing starts (y/y)	Tues 30	10.8%	11.7%
France	Oct industrial production	Tues 30	2.2%	-5.4%
	Oct unemployment rate	Tues 30	11.9%	11.9%
Germany	Nov unemployment West	Frid 3	up 56,000	up 45,000
	Nov employment West	Frid 3	down 34,000	dn 40,000
	Nov unemployment East	Frid 3	up 7,000	up 12,500
During this week...				
Japan	Oct current a/c		\$13.3bn	\$11.6bn
Germany	Oct industrial production (m/m)		2%	0%
Germany	Oct manufacturing output (m/m)		down 2.4%	down 0.3%
Belgium	Nov unemployment (y/y)		13.9%	-

Statistics, courtesy MMS International.

The main economic event in the UK this week is the chancellor's budget statement tomorrow. This will outline changes to taxation and spending, as well as setting out the government's medium term financial strategy.

It comes in a quiet week for UK statistics with today's provisional narrow money supply the only official figure of any note. The purchasing managers' index is released on Wednesday. Although the survey has only a limited track record, it is growing in popularity as a guide to economic activity. Many analysts expect it to maintain last month's rebound, with both the orders and output figures broadly the same.

The more established US version - the National Association of Purchasing Managers Index - is also out on Wednesday. Watched closely as an early indicator of manufacturing health, it is expected to show that orders and output are still buoyant, while prices may fall for the third successive month.

A Bundesbank meeting on Thursday and US jobs figures on Friday add to the week's interest. Non-farm payrolls are expected to rise by about 175,000. There is a steady stream of data in Germany this week, to accompany the central bank's council meeting. Economists believe the real economy data will show that activity remains sluggish, with no signs of recovery but no signs of a double dip either.

Emma Tucker

POLITICAL DIARY



BRUSSELS



WASHINGTON



TOKYO



LONDON

Monday 29: The Seventh European Finance Convention and Ecu Week begins. The theme is the timetable for European monetary union after the collapse of the ERM (to Dec 3).

Thursday 2: European Union foreign affairs ministers hold a special meeting to discuss progress in the Gatté talks at the request of France. It will provide a test of unity ahead of the December 15 deadline for a Gatté deal.

Ministerial meetings of the North Atlantic Council and the North Atlantic Cooperation Council take place to prepare for January's Nato summit (to Dec 3).

Friday 3: The European round table of industrialists unveils a report called "Beating the Crisis - a charter for Europe's Future". It is seen as a counterweight to Jacques Delors' white paper on competitiveness, employment and growth.

This week the nation slowly cranks itself up after the Thanksgiving holiday. Tuesday 30: The World Bank hosts a conference on "Overcoming Global Hunger" (to Dec 1).

Speakers include the UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros Ghali, former US president Jimmy Carter, Bank president Lewis Preston, and congressman Tony Hall, the Ohio Democrat who staged a 33-day fast earlier this year to raise public consciousness of world hunger.

Thursday 2: The US government trade representatives host a multilateral meeting of leading aluminium producing countries, including Russia. The main purpose of the gathering is to discuss what governments can do to help limit upheavals in the western aluminium markets which are being caused by exports from the CIS.

Monday 29: Debate on the government's plans to reform Japan's scandal-prone electoral system begins in Upper house of parliament, having passed in the Lower house on November 18.

Tuesday 30: Mr Carlos Menem, president of Argentina arrives for an official working visit from Dec 1 to 5. He will have talks with prime minister Morihiro Hosokawa.

A second supplementary budget is due to be discussed in the Upper and Lower houses (to Dec 2). It aims to boost the sluggish economy and provide relief for farmers hit by the unusually cool and wet summer.

Wednesday 1: Tokyo's Hotel New Japan, where a fire killed 33 people in 1982 is to be auctioned. The district court has set a reserve price of ¥95.4bn. Last week, the former owner, businessman Hideki Yokoi, received a three-year prison sentence for negligence.

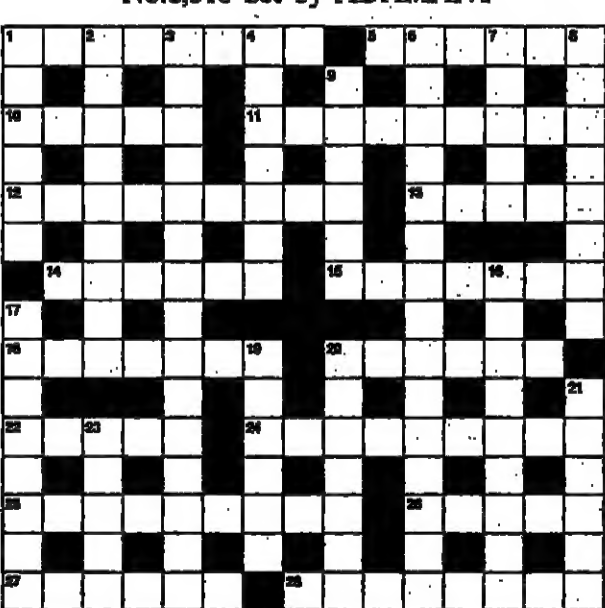
Monday 29: The bill to liberalise trading on Sunday will receive its second reading, following the government's concession allowing working on Sunday to be voluntary for some employees. Unusually, there will be a free vote.

Tuesday 30: Proceedings will be dominated by Kenneth Clarke, chancellor of the exchequer, who is presenting his first Budget.

For the first time, the government's decisions on taxation and spending will be dealt with together.

MONDAY PRIZE CROSSWORD

No.8,318 Set by ADAMANT



A prize of a Pelikan New Classic 200 fountain pen for the first correct solution opened and five runner-up prizes of £25 Pelikan vouchers will be awarded. Solutions by Thursday December 9, marked Monday Crossword 8,318 on the envelope, to the Financial Times, 1 Southwark Bridge, London SE1 1TA. Solution on Monday December 13.

Name: _____
Address: _____

- ACROSS**
- 1 Work on hand at out of control river (5)
 - 2 Chance danger (5)
 - 3 On Number One, Monica's not grunting (5)
 - 4 Mouthpiece of the tobacco lobby? (5)
 - 5 Room above for sale (5)
 - 6 Story of Nelson's followers in the capital (7)
 - 7 It will clear the atmosphere for publishing views about the proviso (5-12)
 - 8 Raise tax on a share (5)
 - 9 At least, such a fantasy should not be a nightmare (5)
 - 10 My clue is solved at college (5)
 - 11 Poor Bert consumed by awful guilt at being an environmental pest (5)
 - 12 Terror of swallowing up medicine is affecting all the world (5)
 - 13 Issue about hip broken by water pipe (5)
 - 14 Song of rising revolutionaries and French volunteers (7)
 - 15 Fly did badly in unfurnished case (5)
 - 16 Put up about a pound - what a bloomer (5)
- DOWN**
- 1 Claim about eastern III-feeling (5)
 - 2 On Number One, Monica's not grunting (5)
 - 3 Mouthpiece of the tobacco lobby? (5)
 - 4 Room above for sale (5)
 - 5 Story of Nelson's followers in the capital (7)
 - 6 It will clear the atmosphere for publishing views about the proviso (5-12)
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 - 15 Put up about a pound - what a bloomer (5)

Of broking and jobbing the Pelikan's fond,
See how sweetly he puts your word onto bond.

Pelikan

JOTTER PAD

"Choose a good brandy.
That way, as the
evening wears on,
only the anecdotes
begin to lack taste."

BILL BRIDGESON,
51-YEAR-OLD BURGER, CALIFORNIA.



INTRODUCE SOME CALIFORNIAN INTO
THE CONVERSATION.

E&J

SINGLE CASK MATURED BRANDY.

OFFICIALS 1550